

Sermons Preached by the Rev. Raymond Shaheen, D. D.

<u>Year: 1957</u>	<u>SERMON TITLE</u>	<u>TEXT</u>
January 13	"The Renewing Of The Mind"	Romans 12: 2
January 27	"So Great Faith"	Matthew 8: 10
February 3	"Hallmark Of Christian Character"	Romans 13: 8
February 10	"The Christian Incentive"	Colossians 3: 17
February 24	"Successor To Judas"	Acts 1: 26
March 3	"Love On Pilgrimage"	
Lent	"A Study In Temptation" (A Series)	Matthew 4
March 10	"When The Devil Comes"	Matthew 4: 3
March 24	"The Temptation To Force God's Hand"	Matthew 4: 1-11
March 31	"The Temptation To Grasp By The Devil's Fingers"	Matthew 4: 3
April 7	"When The Devil Leaves"	Matthew 4: 3
April 14	"Triumphal Entry"	
April 21	"Easter Is God's Answer"	Mark 16: 3-4
May 5	"The Good Shepherd"	John 10: 11
May 12	"The Home In Nazareth"	Luke 2: 51
June 9	"It Could Happen Again"	Acts 2: 1
June 30		Luke 14: 18
July 4	"To Face A Problem"	Mark 8: 5
July 18	"A Good Lesson From A Bad Man"	Luke 16: 1
September 1	"Thoughts Of A Labor Day Sunday"	Thess. 3: 10

<u>1957- continued</u>	<u>SERMON TITLE</u>	<u>TEXT</u>
September 8	"After Hearing - Speaking"	Mark 7: 35
September 15	"The Extravagance Of Love"	Luke 10: 35
September 22	". . . And One Of Them"	Luke 17: 15
October 13	"The Festival Of The Harvest"	Mark 4: 26
October 20	"Enriched By Christ"	I Corinth. 1: 4-5
October 27		
November 3	"How To Know The Lord's Will"	Ephesians 5: 17
November 10	"The Whole Armour Of God"	Ephesians 6: 11
November 17	"As God Forgives"	Matthew 18: 33
November 24	"Children Of Light"	Thess. 1: 5
December 1	"Pilgrimage To Bethlehem"	Luke 2: 15
December 8	"The Innkeeper's Answer"	Luke 2: 7
December 15	"Herod's Answer"	Matthew 2: 16
December 22	"Simeon's Answer"	Luke 2: 28-29

SAINT LUKE LUTHERAN CHURCH
SILVER SPRING, MARYLAND

SERMONS

PASTOR SHAHEEN

1957

January 13, 1957	" THE RENEWING OF THE MIND"	Romans 12:2
January 27, 1957	"SO GREAT FAITH"	Matt. 8:10
February 3, 1957	"HALLMARK OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER"	Romans 13:8
February 10, 1957	"THE CHRISTIAN INCENTIVE"	Col. 3:17
February 24, 1957	"SUCCESSOR TO JUDAS"	Acts 1:26
March 3, 1957	"LOVE ON PILGRIMAGE"	
LENT	"A STUDY IN TEMPTATION" (a series)	Matthew 4
March 10, 1957	" WHEN THE DEVIL COMES"	Matt. 4:3
March 17, 1957	"THE TEMPTATION TO DOUBT"	Matt. 4:3
March 24, 1957	"THE TEMPTATION TO FORCE GOD'S HAND"	Matt. 4:1-11
March 31, 1957	"THE TEMPTATION TO GRASP BY THE DEVIL'S FINGERS"	Matt. 4:3
April 7, 1957	"WHEN THE DEVIL LEAVES"	Matt. 4:3
April 14, 1957	"TRIUMPHAL ENTRY"	
EASTER		
April 21, 1957	"EASTER IS GOD'S ANSWER"	Mark 16:3-4
May 5, 1957	"THE GOOD SHEPHERD"	John 10:11
May 12, 1957	"THE HOME IN NAZARETH"	Luke 2:51
June 9, 1957	"IT COULD HAPPEN AGAIN" (Pentecost)	Acts 2:1
June 30, 1957	"	Luke 14:18
July 4, 1957	"TO FACE A PROBLEM"	Mark 6:5
July 18, 1957	"A GOOD LESSON FROM A BAD MAN"	Luke 16:1

SERMONS - 1957
PASTOR SHAHEEN

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November 17, 1957	"AS GOD FORGIVES"	Matt. 18:33
November 24, 1957	"CHILDREN OF LIGHT"	Thess. 1:5
December 1, 1957	"PILGRIMAGE TO BETHLEHEM"	Luke 2:15
December 8, 1957	"THE INNKEEPER'S ANSWER"	Luke 2:7
December 15, 1957	"HEROD'S ANSWER"	Matt. 2:16
December 22, 1957	"SIMEON'S ANSWER"	Luke 2:28-29

SERMONS - 1957
PASTOR SHAHEEN

Sunday, January 13, 1957

Pastor Raymond Shaheen

The sermon is entitled, "The Renewing of the Mind". The text is from the Epistle for the day, the 2nd Verse of the 12th Chapter of Paul's Letter to the Romans: And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind that ye may prove ~~that~~ what is that which is good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

The Apostle Paul found himself in a rather interesting situation which did not happen very often. Now for once in his life he had about three months of time on his hands. He, who had gone so hurriedly from one village to another, preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, getting this congregation organized and established, and then hurrying on with the gospel of Christ to some other community, well now he found himself in Corinth, and because of the particular situation of the church at that time ;and all of the time he was there, he was longing to be somewhere else. And that place was the great and wonderful city of Rome. I suppose in his breast there was pretty much the same feeling that has come to men and women in succeeding generations. Ah, to see Rome and then to die. For it was an exceedingly wonderful city and he had hoped for the day when he could be there.

The prospect was not too bright, so the Apostle Paul does the next best thing. If he cannot go to them with the gospel of Jesus Christ, then since he had heard, since the gospel had already come to them, a Christian following having been established, then if he could not go to them himself, he would write them a letter. And with three months of time on his hands, small wonder that this letter that went to the Roman church is one of the finest that Paul ever sent to any body of Christians. But are you aware of the problem that he must have had? How does one write to a people that he has never met? How does one write to a people in a city that he has never visited? It is a comparatively easy thing to write letters to our friends. We have had so much in common. There is so much that we can fall to talking about so naturally and so easily. But to write a letter to a people you have never met who live in a city which you have never visited is an interesting problem. But Paul, that amazing character, was always equal to anything that confronted him and I think he must have been . He evaluated the situation just as it was.

Point 1. He was a believer in Jesus Christ.

Point 2. He had heard that they were believers in Jesus Christ who lived in Rome. Now they would have that in common. Each would have had behind him the Christian experience.

Point 3. He had traveled around a good deal. He had had some experience with these people who had come to know Jesus Christ and he had come to appreciate the meaning of an unrewarding (?) Christian. He recognized the fact that the glory that comes to some people on Sunday would fade by the time Monday morning rolls around. Now out of that he writes his letter, and that is why when one comes to this 12th Chapter he finds his soul strangely stirred by these words: Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may know what is that good and perfect and acceptable will of God.

You understand, now, don't you? There wasn't a single person over there in Rome he had ever met. He only knew that they had a Christian experience and out of his experience he knew what would happen to some people if they didn't keep their Christian experience alive. So he is constrained to write this text to them. Be not conformed to this world, but always be transformed and always have your mind renewed that in any situation or any circumstances, you might know what it is that God wants you to do at that time. A healthy bit of advice and one I most certainly hope that . I speak to you this morning as I want always to speak to you -- as a pastor, as a shepherd, as a bishop of your soul. And whatever relationship that I shall ever have with any of you, it must always be in that way.

Now I must tell you something. That once a man has spent perhaps a decade of the ministry, he can well afford to go back and evaluate some of his experiences. So now with sixteen or more years in the ministry, I can tell you honestly that there is nothing, absolutely nothing, that can compare with the privilege that God gives to a pastor, perchance to meet a man at a particular point on the highway of life and who realizes by the word that he speaks that the man moves in the right direction. There isn't anything in the world that can quite

match it. To know that as a pastor, perhaps God gives you more privileges and more opportunities to be at a particular point in some people's lives which becomes the turning point by which they come into the saving grace of Jesus Christ. And then once you have walked with them a while, the day comes when they say, I am ready to publicly profess what I now know. And so, as the pastor, you stand with them to confirm them in the Christian faith. And by the grace of God, you detect a glory and a radiance as this soul has come to realize in no uncertain manner the riches of God's grace. Here is someone being redeemed. Then on a Monday morning there comes a telephone call and the voice at the other end of the wire says, "Pastor, it is different. Everything is so different now that I have confessed Jesus Christ." Or, it could be a letter that expresses the very same thing -- Something has happened to me. And the pastor hangs up the phone -- he puts the letter aside -- and because he has had some experience with human souls, too, he bows his head and he makes a prayer, God, it could fade; God, the glory of this day can pass away. They have it now. Dear God, don't let them lose it.

That is the prayer that a pastor has made sometimes even in your behalf. This reality of Jesus Christ. This marvelous glory. It could fade. It could grow dim. And the Apostle Paul was aware of that. He had seen the people come and exalt (?) Jesus Christ; he had seen the radiance upon their faces. But he also knew when they turned their backs upon the altar, they went back to a world which was in the devil's hand. And the devil would use that very same world with all of its preparations, with all of its prayers of conformity to them again back as they once were (??). And Paul says, parenthetically speaking, I am telling you this; I have never met you; I have never visited Rome, but I have been where other Christians have been found. I have been part of their lives, and I am telling you that don't you dare transform to the ways of the world; ^{you be} ~~that you~~ ~~that~~ constantly conformed. Keep this Christian experience alive.

Beloved, loving anything worth while ever goes on just before. Anything that has any value at all must be guarded, cherished, nurtured perchance, and . No one ever comes to Jesus Christ in one moment and says, I be-

lieve in you and I am now aware of your presence in my heart. Period. And then say to himself, This is it. From that point onward he automatically drifts along the stream of life until some day he comes to the great harbor called Heaven. Nothing worthwhile ever happens automatically. Nothing worthwhile can ever be perserved automatically. There must be the constant renewal, the refreshing, the restoring. The poet, speaks to our condition, doesn't he, when he says,

Where is the blessedness I knew when first I saw the Lord?
Where is the soul's refreshing view of Jesus and his word?

For some of us the most wonderful thing that has ever happened is to be made aware of the reality of Jesus Christ. But that will not take care of itself alone, for when Jesus Christ calls a man he does not say, Now you go and set yourself upon some solitary hill and let the rest of the world go by. When Jesus Christ comes into a man's life, he doesn't say, Now that is all there is to it. You go into some place and keep this experience to yourself. Ah, no, when Jesus Christ comes into a man's life, that man is compelled, yea, verily constrained to go back into the very world of which he is a part, and there in that world the pressures begin to pile upon him and it is always the attempt to make us conform to the way of the world. Says the Apostle Paul, don't let that happen to you, but be constantly transformed by refreshing your mind of this experience.

Let me ask you a question? Why is it that a very high percentage of some of us who are present here today, were here last week and will be here again next Sunday? Why is it that for the most part, you who are numbered among the faithful cannot keep from this place? Why do you keep coming back again, again and again. I shall answer you that question by asking another question. Why is it that morning after morning ^{you eat} ~~you eat~~ your breakfast, why is it that noon after noon you come back to eat luncheon, why is it that evening after evening you sit down to dinner? For the simple reason that you have discovered that the physical body needs to be restored and to be renewed. You don't sit down at a ~~big~~ banquet feast and say, This is it. This will last me now. You come back again and again because necessity

requires that the body shall be renewed and rebuilt. Even so there were some of us who cannot keep from this place come a Sunday because we realize that here this is the place of refreshing, this is the place of renewal, this is where we can be restored. Here we can recall again and again the precious promises of God. Here we can remember the promises we made to him that our minds should be renewed.

Why does the church, the Lutheran church, cling tenaciously to its liturgy? Why do we ask you, Sunday morning after Sunday morning, when you come, to spend at least six or seven minutes going from page to page in the prescribed Order for Worship? For the simple reason, it should seem to me, my friend, that here in that Order of Liturgy you will find all the basic ingredients for a satisfying religious experience. That here in that liturgy in petition after petition, in the proclamation of promise after promise, in the of praise that you give to Jesus Christ, you will find all the earmarks of what has happened to you once upon a time when first you realized that Jesus Christ came into the world to save you. Here on pages 9 and 10 in particular, we remind ourselves every Sunday of the faith of God. No question about it. God is; God loves me; God cares for me; God sends Jesus Christ into the world to be my redeemer. What is more, God now gives me his holy spirit that I may persevere with patience in the course which is mine to run. That is why we come back Sunday after Sunday to renew our minds of this precious Christian experience.

Genevieve Huie, that capable and effecient secretary of our Church Council, was perfectly *justified* when she interrupted the quiet of my study to ask me, Do you realize that tomorrow is an anniversary Sunday in Saint Luke Church? And I had to answer that I was not aware of it. And I said to her, Should we make an occasion of it? And her answer simply was this: Well, we did on the 15th, perhaps not so much on the 16th -- ah, but listen to this as I rremember what she said -- I think it well that the people should be reminded -- and she is perfectly right. We who enjoy so much the fruits of those early years, we ought to remember, we ought to renew our minds of the fact that seventeen years ago only a handful of

people constituted Saint Luke Church. We who worship amid these clean and strong walls ought to have our minds renewed that once upon a time when people came to worship in the church the congregation they met for five years in a borrowed room and a good portion of each Sunday morning was spent perhaps in tidying up the place and making it look half-decent. People who have come lately on the scene should constantly renew their minds on the history of this congregation, short as it might be, brilliant as it is. In the renewing of our minds, we should also see that we become alert to these things. As they met the challenge in those early days, are we meeting the challenge in this day? We ought to renew our minds on this point specifically -- they did so much with so little.

Now you finish that sentence -- we who have so much more, how much more ought we not to do? It is good, my friend, to have one's mind renewed, not only as a member of the congregation, but very specifically as an individual believer in Jesus Christ. That is why some of us read our Bible day after day, say our prayers morning and night, cannot keep from this place come Sunday, and whenever we have the opportunity, we kneel before the altar for the blessed sacrament. In these things we might renew our minds again. God loves you us; Jesus Christ died to save us. And as a believer in the Lord, Jesus Christ, conformed to his pattern under any condition or circumstance. And there is the rub. Changes and circumstances come. No one ~~body~~^{day} is quite like another and unless we constantly renew our minds concerning our Christian allegiance to God, we cannot actually know at that moment what the will of God is for our minds in this particular situation.

I want to share with you now what is in my book a very precious thing. It is a legend. It comes from a far away land. You can call ~~it~~^{it} a legend of Jericho, if you want to. It is the story of an old man with bent shoulders and white hair who every day at sunset time came and stood in contemplation beneath the great tree in Jericho. People observed him as he came, a familiar sight, an old man, shoulders bent with the years, white hair and underneath the sycamore tree. One day someone made bold to ask him to explain. He simply said, I am Zaccheus. Years ago it was here that I first met my Lord. It was the most wonderful thing that ever happened to me, and I come back here again and again to renew the experi-

ence, to keep it ever fresh.

Beloved, the world on the outside wants you to conform to its pattern. The pressure is great. The interior of a church is a quiet place where man can think anew upon

If it please God, would it be that you have come back here again and again to renew in your mind the glorious fact that you belong to God, that nothing, absolutely nothing, need ever put asunder that bond, it seems to me that if ~~#####~~ this should happen Sunday after Sunday, it is the only real way by which you can be worth anything at all come Monday.

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Sunday, January 27, 1957

Pastor Raymond Shaheen

The sermon is entitled, "So Great Faith". The text is from the Gospel lesson for the day, the 10th verse of the 8th chapter of the Gospel according to Saint Matthew: "When Jesus heard it, he marvelled and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." Now those are the very same words that were read a short while ago as a part of the Gospel lesson for the day, and I am not so sure that your reaction is one bit different now than it was then. And I am constrained to tell you that perhaps the writer of the Gospel record is entitled to something more than you have already given to these words. Let me read them for you again, and see if there is any reaction inside you.

"And Jesus said unto them that followed, verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. Jesus Christ was spending so much of his time, going around, knocking on the doors of people's hearts, trying to see if there was any degree of faith at all that he could encourage and develop. He had to spend so much time trying to lift people's sights, trying to stir their souls, trying to get them to have thoughts of one another, kind thoughts of one another and good thoughts of God, and lo and behold, here is a man who comes to him with a faith already made, who offers his own life as the very good background upon which the work of Christ could be done!

I gave you a definition for faith, didn't I? Maybe that is what you can say faith is. Faith is the background we offer God by which he can do some great work in our midst. And that is precisely what this man was offering Jesus Christ.

Now I will tell you why I say this is a startling text if you haven't discovered it for yourself by this time. Not only was Jesus always looking for a faith and spending time trying to encourage it; here was a faith already made, and what is more, the second thing to be said about it was that it was a great faith, above the average, more than the usual, and then get this, my friend,

Jesus Christ had to add these words, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.

Now, if the first part of this text should make you sit on the edge of your seats, this ought almost to bring you to your feet for Jesus Christ is handing out a compliment to a man who was a failure. Jesus Christ is saying good things about a man's faith, and you could not find that man's name on any church roll. That is a startling thing to say. Here is a great faith, but the man is outside the church. He is not a child of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. He is a pagan. Now if that alert mind of yours is beginning to quarrel at this point with me that I should pay tribute to a man outside the church, have patience, my friends. You don't have to quarrel with me. I will step aside and you can take your case directly to Jesus Christ. For it is Jesus who says to this man, Your faith is great. Aye, I have never seen anything like it in Israel. And by that he meant the established church. You dare not misunderstand. I sing the praise of all of those who mark the path that leads to God's house. I sing the praise of all those who take seriously their sacred obligation. But there comes a time when each of us must recognize the fact that God does not limit the operation of his Holy Spirit just to us. The text, my friend, is at once a rebuke and likewise a challenge. The text is a rebuke to those of us who are numbered among the faithful who think we can have a corner upon God, who may foolishly believe that our faith is perfect, who may foolishly think that unless a man prays the way we pray, that unless a man approaches God by the same pattern that you and I approach him, his faith is not as valid as ours. This is a rebuke, my friends, to people who may sometimes think that way. It is a rebuke to us, also, when all too often we have failed to encourage people on the outside when the strange stirrings of the Holy Spirit is already at work in their lives, a rebuke to any man who puts blinders upon his eyes and fails to see how God is at work in people who may be different than we. On the other hand, the text is a great challenge -- of course a rebuke, but to those of us who are the children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and who know the of Jesus

Christ, the text is a glorious challenge. If Jesus Christ can compliment a man for his faith who did not have the advantages that we have, what more wonderful thing could he say of us when our advantages are so great? We are the children of a Sunday School age. We have been taught the sacred scriptures. We are the children of a worshipping age. Our doors are open. We can come to God's house. We are the people to whom the scriptures are available. We pride ourselves in being called Christians. We benefit from Christian culture. We benefit from living in a so-called Christian age. If these are our advantages; if we are -- and I hesitate to use the word; I am not so sure it is most apt -- but if we are numbered among those who are numbered on the inside, how much greater should our faith be, what more wonderful thing could Jesus Christ say of us, if this is what he could say of a pagan.

Now let me tell you a bit about this centurian, why this faith was declared such a wonderful thing. In the first place, he was a Roman, he was not a Jew. That meant several things. He was a pagan. He did not believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He believed in many Gods and as a Roman, he was an outsider. As a , the underdog. And by the very same sign, being a soldier and a centurian, having a hundred men under him, he was used to commanding them, people keep people in subjection. He could be impervious to their condition, unmindful of certain conditions. All of these things could have been obstacles to his developing a faith, but in spite of these things, he was concerned for the need of a man who was previously tormented and was sick of the palsy. That is the reason why he could come to Jesus the way he did, because he had a great concern for the needs of fellowmen. Now that is in itself no small thing. I wish I could tell you how he got that way. Honestly, ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ I cannot. How was it that for him the greatest thing in the world was the need of a human soul? But that was true. And for that man in need he used no label except that he was in need. He was a Roman. He did not look upon this man as a Jew. He was a centurian, a commanding officer. He did not look upon this man as a subject. He was a pagan. He did not hold in scorn

another man's religion. Now because of his concern for the human soul, he made possible the groundwork upon which Jesus Christ could work. Free from prejudice -- it is so different from our day. We who are the children of the light, how great is the temptation in our day to go our way always building walls, giving men labels and failing often to see the naked human soul. A poet may aptly describe your situation and mine in this day when he writes: My friends and I have built a wall between us and high the stories of it, and high with scorn and plastered thick with pride; oh, we talk across those stubborn stories (?) so arrogantly tall; only we cannot touch our hands, since we have built the wall.

That is a terrible thing that could be said about us -- the walls that we build between ourselves and other people; the path that we take and perhaps never the twain shall meet. This man of whom Jesus Christ said, You have a great faith and I will work a miracle in your behalf, is a man who was completely free from only the basic need of a human soul. But in our day the walls we build, Christians against other Christians; Christians themselves build walls between Catholics and Protestants, Christians build walls against Jews and Moslems and all the other religions of the world, and for so little one against the other; the East against the West, the white man against the black man -- the walls we build -- the United States against Russia -- the walls we erect, the labels we use.

After the first World War pathetically one author wrote these lines: If only, if only somehow, by some miracle, the German could have seen the peasants of Belgium; if only he could have been in their town and seen how they went out to their fields to work their fields by day; if only he could have seen how they had their fellowship at night; if only he could have seen in Belgium the peasants take their children about them and pray and tuck them to bed reverently. If only, he said, Germany, or any nation, whatever it is, that goes to war against another

only because they happened to be the two at that time, but if only the one who was on the ~~same~~ one side and the other on the other, if only they could see themselves free from labels, free from the fact that there is a wall

that man has erected, and understand the one on the other side as a human being who could be in need. Jesus paid this great compliment to a man, pagan as he was, who saw somebody in need and did not use any labels -- a slave; a servant; a jew; a believer -- he cast them to the side. He only knew one thing -- a man was in need.

Was that the only thing he knew? I can't end the sermon there. He knew something else. He knew that Jesus Christ was interested in that man likewise. He knew that if only he could bring this thing to the attention of Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ would do something about it. For with Jesus Christ there is no use of labels. Precious in the sight of Jesus is the soul of any man. And he had faith by which he could believe this thing about Jesus.

One is reminded of the words of Chestertown who writes a biography of St. Francis of Assisi, and he tries to tell us something about the tremendous strength of the life of St. Francis, and somewhere he writes these words: No one ever stood in front of the Francis of _____, no one ever stood in front of him, be he the czar or be he the peasant, be he the son of the king or some backward from the woods, no one ever stood in front of St. Francis without feeling that those brown burning eyes of his were focused directly upon this man and his need. The Roman centurian must have felt that those ^{brown} burning eyes of Jesus Christ were meant to focus upon this man in his need as well.

Beloved, I am about to turn my back on this sacred desk at this particular moment. The sermon will have been preached, but there is a thought that I would ~~now~~ now leave with you: Faith is the necessary background upon which Jesus Christ can work his deeds of love, mercy and truth. If a pagan, a man without the advantages that you and I have, could offer such a wonderful thing to Jesus Christ, can you possibly imagine what a wonderful thing that you and I could offer him, if on the basis of our knowledge of his truth, if on the basis of our previous acquaintance with Jesus Christ we could come to him likewise? There are two things I hope he will say to you when you meet Him face to face, when you enter through the great

Gate, I should like very much to hear Him say to you: It's good to see you here. And I hope he will add something else, You should feel at home here because when you were down there I observed your faith. It was big enough for all mankind; it was big enough for me.

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Sunday, February 3, 1957

Pastor Raymond Shaheen

This morning's sermon is entitled, "Hallmark of Christian Character", and the text is from the Epistle lesson for the day, an Epistle lesson which has almost any verse that could serve as the text, but for our purpose, the opening verse of the Epistle is the text, the 8th verse of the 13th Chapter of Romans: Owe no man anything, but to love one another.

Now where in the world would a man get a notion like that? Owe no man anything but to love one another --- Oh, it isn't the first part of the text that puzzles me. Most of us can understand this, and there is a kind of appeal that comes to each of us. Owe no man anything. What a wonderful thing it would be if we could run our way through life without being obligated to anyone -- to say what we want to say and not concern ourselves whether we hurt anyone's feelings or not; to think what we want to think and not be mindful of the fact that even our thoughts could have consequence, good or evil, eventually for someone else's condition; to say, to think, to do anything that we want to do without regard for any other man -- that appeals to some of us, to be able to run our course through life independently. No, it isn't that part of the text that bothers me. There is a sufficient amount of appeal in that part of the text to appeal to any man, and he thinks at once he understands it.

But Paul had a way of going on and finishing some of his sentences. That is what he did in this particular verse, and the last part is far more important than the first. Owe no man anything but to love one another. To love one another. Any man. Every man. To be in duty bound to love every one. To consider it a sacred obligation to love everyone. It is one thing to be under obligation to those who are good to us, to those who are kind to us. It is a salutary thing to be obligated to pay back to another man something that he has either given us or done for us. That kind of obligation we might be able to understand. But where in the world did a man get a notion like this, that I should be under obligation to love every man? You have to remember who the person is who first spoke these words, who first wrote

these words. You are right. He was a strange character, especially (?) strange because he had undergone a very strange experience. Something awesome had happened to him once and he never allowed himself to forget it. One day with bitterness in his heart, and having gotten official orders he was going to spell death to certain people who were called Christians, his aim in life was to run counter to Jesus Christ. And one day in one great dazzling moment he was confronted, he was encountered by Jesus Christ. Something happened to him, the like of which had never occurred before and we hope will never occur again, so terrible, so awesome a thing was it. And in the weeks and months that followed that experience he had to accept the fact that Jesus Christ, God of God, Very God of Very God, loved him, even though he was running his life counter to the will of Christ and against the very purposes of God. He saw himself as the sinner; he saw himself loved, everlastingly so, by the certain and unfailing arms of God. And once that happened to Paul, he was never again the same. And he began to write these strange-sounding things. He began to write these things, that brilliant so radical a ^{genuinely?} such as this text: Owe no man anything, but to love him.

Now let me tell you something: I have been wrestling with this text myself for some time. And I always come out at this end -- It is one of those texts, uncomfortably so, that means exactly what it says. Manuever as you may wish. You cannot find yourself in any position whereby you can evade the obligation of this church. Owe no man anything but to love one another. A sense of obligation to love people.

Now this is the first thing that bothered me -- and you might just as well be on the inside as on the out, working out this sermon -- this is how this sermon came to me. The raising of certain awkward questions, but necessary ones. Obligated to love? An echo of the voice of Jesus Christ, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. How can you compel any man to love somebody else? We used to think, you know, that it just happened. There it was -- I am in love with her. Just like that. And so we carry that over into a lot of other grounds and we think that

love just happens. But the echo and the re-echo of the voice of Jesus Christ is a command -- you are to do it because I expect you to do it. You are to do it out of obedience. You are not forgetting, are you, that practically everything that happens in the New Testament was first written to people who were not strangers to the name of Jesus Christ, and that a number of these specific directives are being given those people who take (?) the name of Jesus Christ, and for people who know Jesus there are certain things expected from them that we might not ordinarily expect from other people. Therefore, as far as a Christian is concerned, he is under obligation if he is to be worthy of the name of Jesus Christ; he is in duty bound to love other people. He has no choice. It is to be expected of us and eventually we recognize it as the hallmark of Christian character.

Now this is the other ~~that~~ troubled me in the development of this sermon. To love everyone. One cannot do that. And then it occurred to me that I was badly confused at certain points. I was confusing liking and loving, and there is a world of difference. We sometimes think that liking is loving. It isn't so. We like something when we are attracted to it. There is something about it that appeals to us. We go to a meeting and we go away from the meeting, and say, So and So got up to speak. I think I like that person. And chances are we are thinking of the sound of his or her voice, the manner by which the truth is being able to come so easily to her personality, in his personality, the forcefulness by which the thing was done; we think about the things in that person that are attractive to us and, therefore, we say, I like that person. To like someone is to react favorably because of the pleasurable aspect of that person or thing. Now it used to bother me a great deal that as a Christian, -- and I use the term advisedly as I affix it to myself -- that as a Christian there were some people that I could not like; some things about them that just rubbed me the wrong way -- their basic personality traits and characteristics -- for the life of me I just couldn't like them, and that bothered me until one day I discovered that there are some people who just didn't like me, and that bothered me, too, because I thought they were Christian folk and that would entitle me to some sort of favorable impression.

But the more I wrestled with it, the more I am convinced that there is a great difference between liking and loving. Because we are human there are some people who may not be attractive to us because of their personality traits and characteristics. Frankly speaking, there are some people that I would ~~want~~ not want to have stay in my home indefinitely; there are some people that, if I were making up a party and going on a tour, that I would be very happy if they were not included in the group. Now what gives at that point? Is it simple? (?) Then I happened to remember that sometimes a parent will say to a child when something has been done by that child that is not very pleasant and not very nice, Mother doesn't like it when you do this. And sometimes forcefully they may say, Mother doesn't like you when you act like that, but Mother isn't saying "I don't love you". Now there is the difference. Love is constant; love remains. We may have our likes and our dislikes, but love is the constant activated good-will in behalf of somebody under any conditions or circumstances, come wind or weather.

I may be skating on thin ice when I say that sometimes I wonder if Jesus liked everyone of his disciples. I am wondering if he could like Peter in those certain moments when Peter came to him and made all kinds of promises and Jesus knew very well that what Peter was saying wasn't true. I am wondering if there were not certain moments when Judas Iscariot disturbed and irritated at human when he knew very well what was in Judas Iscariot and how he would stoop so very low to do the things that he did. It doesn't seem to me a sinful thing to say that even Judas Iscariot could not be called attractive and likeable to the Son of God in a moment like that. And I say to myself, sinner that I know myself to be, how could Jesus like me, the promises that I missed, the good I would do and do not? But I am reminded of the fact that God loves me. Loves -- that is the language of the New Testament. That is the verb that is used. It isn't a matter of God liking me; it is a matter of God loving me. And Christian love is this, my friend. It is activated good will in behalf of any man, regardless of the conditions or circumstances in which he may be found.

Not too long ago at the worship service at 9:30, Maebelle Hosterman knelt at this altar as we made a kind of farewell prayer in her behalf as she will shortly head to Liberia where she will serve as a medical missionary. I said to Maebelle, Answer me honestly -- and I pressed the point quite *earnestly* -- "Maebelle, do you like the Liberians?" I had known she was there for six years before; I had seen some of her pictures; I had read some of her letters; I had come to appreciate to a degree how unattractive the field is in Liberia. I cannot erase from my mind the pictures of those highly unattractive and repulsive people with those incurable diseases that makes them a walking death; and as a nurse she has to touch them, has to smell them; she has to live with them. "Maebelle, tell me honestly, do you really like them?" And her answer was the answer of a human being, a soul totally committed to Jesus Christ: "Like them? Some of them; some of them; But not all of them." Then, why does she go? Why will she sacrifice this very important period of her life, old enough to appreciate the meaning of security, old enough to appreciate the value of a home and family, why should she sacrifice this important period of her life? Because as one person she is constrained by the love of Jesus Christ to love them, and to love them for her is activated good will, to minister to them in their needs regardless of their condition or circumstances.

Where in the world could a man like Paul get a notion like this? Owe no man anything but to love him. Have a compassion that is beyond all constraint, be compelled to do it. But before I answer that question for you, let me go back and pick up this question. Don't you dare excuse yourselves for the fact that you may think it a very human thing and a very ordinary thing not to like some people. It isn't as easy as that. we are expected to learn to like some people and as we learn to like them, it becomes easier to love them. And as long as we hide behind the fact that we don't like them, it may become harder to like them. Activated good will; ~~exercises~~ exercise it so one might also learn to like them.

I am reminded of this practically every time I stand before a man and a woman at a sacred altar and they are about to pledge their love to each other.

What does John say to Mary, "I will love you so long as I like you?" "I will love you as long as you are attractive to me?" That isn't the language of love, Christian love. The language of Christian love is, I will love you until death may part us. And there are those of us who know that the love we have for someone is deathless.

Now, where did Paul get this notion -- Owe no man anything but to love him. He was a disciple of Jesus Christ, and once upon a time God's Great Galilean was talking about love. And he gave an unforgettable picture. You will never forget it, my friend, once you have heard it -- that parable of a good samaritan.

he was talking about love, he put a man in need in front of another man and he said, Focus your eye upon someone who needs what you have to offer, what you have already received by the grace of God. Now that was something very, very new. I think up to the time that Jesus spoke that people had this concept of love and human relationships: A man would put himself in the center and then he would draw a ring, and in that ring next to him would be his immediate family -- and he considered himself in duty-bound to love them. And then he would draw another ring, perchance, and that ring would be his immediate community. And another ring might be his clan or his tribe, and another ring for races. He would work out in that direction from himself. Jesus Christ, the great on the page of history comes along and he says, That isn't the way. In the center you put a man in need, any man, any man. We don't use labels here -- regardless of creed, color, circumstances, condition, rich or poor -- any man. You put him right in front of you. And because God has been good to you, you are to love him. And to love him means you are to work in his behalf. Owe no man anything but to love him. Where in the world did the Apostle Paul get a notion like that?

And the answer comes quickly, my friends. He didn't get it in this world, because the world doesn't talk like that. The world doesn't think like it. The world says, You love your own. God bless me, my son John, my wife, my ; us four, no more. That is the way the world thinks. Owe no man anything but to love one another. He didn't get that in this world. He happened to recall the tremen-

dous truth of Jesus Christ, who one time called a handful of disciples to his side and he said, I want to tell you something; by this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if ye love one another. This is the hallmark of Christian character. Where in the world did Paul get it? He didn't get it from the world; he got it when he got a glimpse of heaven. And that is what makes the difference, the tremendous difference.

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Sunday, February 10, 1957

Pastor Raymond Shaheen

That hymn that we have just sung is almost the perfect hymn for this text. They fit together as the and the perfect glove fits on the right hand. "Teach me, my God and King, in all things thee to see; and what I do in anything, to do it as for thee." It is the companion hymn, so it would seem for this text which serves as the basis for this morning's sermon. The sermon is entitled, "The Christien's Incentive" and the text is from the Epistle lesson for the day, the 17th verse of the 3rd Chapter of Paul's Letter to the Colossians: "And whatsoever ye do in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ."

Would you believe me if I were to tell you that this bit of holy advice is being given by a man who is in jail. This is the advice that a man in jail gives to people on the outside, being wholly aware of the fact that because he followed this advice he happens to be where he is. For this it was forever keeping his mind that no matter where he was, there was something he should do for Jesus Christ. No matter where he went he was doing things in the name of Jesus. Because he did it so consistently, he got himself in trouble with the authorities. He was forever dealing with people who could not quite understand the man was so great a passion. Strange, isn't it, that a man who having followed his own advice would see fit to give it to people who lived on the outside?

"And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do it all in the name of Jesus." And if you ,think that is strange, listen to this, my friend: He was giving this bit of advice to people who were slaves, for the most part, that is. People who were being held in bondage; people who had always over them the tyrant's . And Paul says to them, You have taken the name of Christ; now any day, every day, come wind or weather, regardless of the circumstances or situation in which you may be found, continually glorify Jesus Christ by your day's work. The man who had followed his own advice and landed in jail, writes to people on the outside whom he has come to love dearly: Even though you may be slaves with an almost meaningless existence that is characteristic of the life of a slave, I am still telling .you that as a

believer in Jesus Christ. do even that day's work as in his sight and as though it could be worthy of his faith (?). When you read the pages of the new Testament, read it, my friend, as though you had not seen it before reading it, so thoughtfully giving the full measure of credence to every paragraph, you are overwhelmed by the thought that the people who made up the early church were people who lived their religion ~~starkly~~ ^{daringly} and recklessly and who went forward to face any condition as though they were ready to die any minute for what they believed.

I say to you, What made them live like that? Whence this motive? What was their incentive? They had it, and the Epistle lesson for today tells us exactly what it was. They looked upon _____ as an opportunity to do something for Jesus Christ. That was their incentive. That is exactly why they lived the way they lived; that is exactly why they died the way they died -- because they had an incentive and nothing, absolutely nothing, would deter it. I presume it can be safely said that there is no substitute for incentive. Most of us are constantly in need of it. Something to inspire us; something to keep us going, for life itself can become so monotonous. Read some novels and you become fairly nauseated by the fact that here are people with unusual gifts perhaps, who waste them so easily because they have nothing for which to live, and because they have nothing for which to live, they even die so aimlessly. In that interesting book, "Northwest Passage" as I recall it now, having read it some years back, they seem to be having a great deal of difficulty with a certain character -- as they are in their great adventure they feel the need of having people around them who will live recklessly with great daring, offering themselves as a sacrifice upon an altar. And someone says to this man, whose integrity now is in question, You don't seem to be willing to do this, to offer your life so recklessly, so daringly. You ought to have something for which to die. And he responds, sadly enough: The trouble is I haven't a thing for which to live, and if I had something for which to live, then I would have something for which to die. A matter of incentive, you see, that would keep us constantly going back, day after day,

and when you read the pages of the New Testament you have to say to yourself, These people have something for which to live or they would not have died the way they died. Beloved, they had an incentive. Whatsoever they did, they did for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Oh, this matter of incentives isn't anything new to us, either. I don't pose as an economist; I don't pose as a student of labor and management; I don't pose as one who knows all the answers for personnel matters that confront people, but I am tremendously impressed that in these days these words seem to be the part of the vocabulary of some people involved in industry and management: Fringe benefits; incentives. And we do everything we can, don't we, in the business world to make the day attractive to the employee. I smile to myself rather easily when I read those rather attractive ads where they are manufacturing typewriters in lovely shades of pastel, taking away that drab, monotonous black, allowing ourselves to believe, you see, if only the secretary could sit down to a most attractive typewriter, she would get her work out easier with greater efficiency, and when the day was done she would be so glad she worked at that particular office.

I remember hearing a man going to a meeting and with pride he says, Since we have piped music into our factory, how much more contented our workers are. They seem now to come to their day's work with a kind of spring in their steps. We have given them some kind of an incentive, even to piping music into the floor where they work.

This whole matter of incentive is no idle dream. People do work better when they are encouraged; people do work better when they have something that inspires them and motivates them, no matter what it may be. The early Christians had an incentive and their incentive was linked with something that was outside this world. Their incentive was born out of the allegiance they had to Jesus Christ. And whatever they did, they did for Him.

Let us take this text now. Choose a word here and choose a word there and let it be fraught with meaning for us. Let us begin with this word: And whatsoever ye do,

do in the name of the Lord Jesus. Whatsoever. Most of us are a strange lot. We like to divide up our lives. We have little compartments of to the Lord Jesus we will give him something, but everything? I am not so sure. Unwittingly, what are we doing today, some of us? It is Sunday. All right, Lord, you can have Sunday morning at eleven o'clock. I will give you that much. And the rest of the week, how many are there who take all the other hours and days of the week and say, Yea, God, I will give that to you, too; and all that I may think, and all that I may say, and all that I may do, I will offer that to you likewise.

That Apostle Paul had a way of using words that we could understand. And he also had a way of making those words mean exactly what they were meant to mean. "Whatsoever you may do," says the Apostle Paul. That is exactly what I mean to say, for a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, all that he has and all that he does, no matter what it may be, he should make as a contribution to Jesus Christ. Whatsoever ye do. The Church has been in error too long in permitting people to think that there can be this dividing line for a Christian between secular and spiritual. Whatsoever a Christian does should be done with a spiritual significance.

Dr. Frederick Reissig was perfectly right when at that recent annual congregational meeting he raised a finger in warning at one paragraph in a proposal being offered by the Committee on the Revision of the Constitution and By-Laws, and I hang my head in shame for allowing it to go unnoticed by myself, in which reference was made to the church in all of its affairs, secular and spiritual. The criticism is perfectly valid. As far as the Christian church is concerned, everything that concerns her, everything that she does, everything has spiritual significance. So it is for the life of the individual Christian. If he commits himself to Jesus Christ, then he has only one pair of spectacles to wear, that is the pair that uses spiritual vision.

Whatsoever you may do, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Beloved, if there is one thing that I should like to make clear to you as long as I can come and stand at this sacred desk, aside from the fact that God loves you and God came

to redeem you through Jesus Christ, it should most certainly be this, that the sum total of your life belongs to Jesus Christ. Not simply this hour that you spend here so easily on a Sunday morning. Pleasing in the sight of ^{Almighty} God is not what he sees right now alone, but the honesty, the integrity by which you take up your day's work tomorrow morning. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do in the name of the Lord Jesus, in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Years ago that word may have meant or was understood to mean the sum total of one's characteristics, being true to one's nature. Now for the Christian this means that whatever he may do, he ought to do according to the spirit and the nature and the character of Jesus Christ. As much as to say, if I may put it for you in this fashion: If Jesus Christ were keeping this set of books that becomes my responsibility, how would Jesus Christ keep this set of books? If Jesus Christ were preparing this brief that I now must prepare, how would Jesus Christ prepare this brief? If Jesus Christ were working in this office where I am now, how would Jesus Christ go about his day's work? If Jesus Christ in the flesh could be present in my home while as a housewife and a mother I perform these menial tasks, in what spirit would He perform these things? That is what it means, doesn't it? Whatsoever ye do, do in the name of the Lord Jesus, in his spirit, according to his nature.

Now, don't forget it, my friends. This bit of advice was given by a Christian to fellow Christians. If a man wants to take the name of Christ, he is in duty bound to live according to basic Christian teachings. Now people who don't know Jesus Christ, who haven't made the promises to him that you and I have made, maybe we won't expect them to accept his teaching. Maybe it is difficult enough for you and me who do understand to take them seriously. But nonetheless, Paul is writing as a Christian to another Christian. Whatsoever you do, do it in the spirit of Jesus Christ. Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus -- in the name of the Lord Jesus. That is richly significant. Christians believe that they have a personal tie with Jesus Christ. Isn't it a wonderful thing, so it seems to me, when Jesus Christ came walking to the different towns and saw

those people so easily beset by their day's work, and after he made contact with each one of them, what was the net result of it? Each one went his way, each one after a valid contact had been made with Jesus Christ, believing that Jesus Christ was interested in him, what he was, what he was doing. Beloved, you will that I am wrong when I say that for ~~the~~ most of us, there isn't anything quite as strong as the personal label, the personal loyalty that we have (?). This was their good incentive, these early Christians, they had a personal loyalty to Jesus Christ. Now we ought to understand that. There are some secretaries who refuse to change bosses, even though the salaries elsewhere might be better, because they have a boss who understands, who is sympathetic to the concerns in that office. There are some men who marry particular women, I think, after it is all said and done, because they have happened to discover, wittingly or unwittingly, that these people inspire them as no one else seems to inspire. Some of us cherish the friends that we have because our friends encourage us to be loyal to the that is within us. These early Christians had a personal loyalty to Jesus Christ, no matter where they went, no matter what they did, they did it as if in their sight they wanted to become loyal to their faith.

Sometime I want to find a book that bears this interesting title for in that book there is a character who had been converted from a life of sin, and when he from drunkenness and laziness, he discovers that he is doing an honest day's work easily and clearly. And one day when the foreman doesn't show up, he is the only one who goes back to his day's work with the degree of integrity that should become every honest employee. His friends chide him, they ridicule him, and he replies when they say to him, The boss isn't looking, the boss isn't around, and angry as he may be, he simply replies, Well, since I have been converted, I have been doing my day's work for the Lord and the Lord is always around, and the Lord is always looking.

Now, my friend, don't you dare make fun of a man who talks like that. Not even simple as it may be, you cannot ignore the truth of what he declares, and you

covet the type of affection a man would have for Jesus Christ that would make him think and talk like that. Why should you make fun of him? Tell me, now, honestly, is it any different from the very learned Johann Sebastian Bach, who before any score that he would write would write at the head of the page, Solium Dei Gkriam^(?), Only to the Glory of God.

Learned or illiterate -- each man his own way, the saying, ^{What} / I am doing, I am doing to the glory of God. Beloved, your work can become monotonous, can't it? Sure it can. You can become beset with fear and frustration. Of course, you can. But as a Christian you can fortify yourself against something like that if you will get to the place where you will offer every day as a contribution to God.

After a man spends about a decade in the ministry, he enjoys looking back and evaluating certain personal contacts he has made, and if by the grace of God, I can find God used me me at that time to turn that man's life in another direction, I was grateful. One ,time there was a man who came to his pastor and he said, There is something wrong with me. I lack zest. I cannot do my work with enthusiasm. And in the course of the conversation, ~~in~~ the Pastor said, And pray tell, what are you doing? How are you earning a living? And he told the Pastor what his occupation was, and it wasn't the most salutary of ways and means with which to earn a living. And I said to him, That is your trouble, my friend. That is your trouble. You are not giving your life to the right thing. You can't honestly say that your days' work can be a contribution to the kingdom. You can't honestly say when you end your day's work, Here, God, the day is over. May what I have done be worth offering unto thee? And my friend began to reason for himself, and this is the way he tried to stake his life against circumstances and against certain latent talents that he had. He could speak; he could hear; he could think. These were the gifts of God, he said, and if God has given me two hands, ought I not to use my hands in doing something to glorify Him? If God has given me a brain, should not I use my brain to think something that would be helpful to him and to his children. When he began to think like that, his life was changed. at night that he could he could also make

as a contribution to the

She spoke a great truth, that French peasant woman, when as she made the sign of the cross over any loaf of bread -- she could take any one of those loaves and use it upon the altar

Beloved, that ought to be the way with your life and mine. Any day; any day's work ought to be worthy of the sign of the cross; any day's work ought to be something that we could offer to God and say, Here, God, even my day's work I offer to you. When that will happen to you, my friend, a lot of your fear will be banished. The fear of failure, because anything offered to God can never be considered a failure. When that should happen to you, some of your frustrations will disappear, because God has a way of taking anything and fitting it into a pattern, out of which some kind of good may come.

In a few minutes in the parting minutes of the service you shall sing. You will wait to receive a benediction. The Pastor, in the name of God, will pronounce upon you our Heavenly Father's blessing. You understand the meaning of the deed (?), don't you? It isn't simply a blessing on this particular hour you have spent here in Church. The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord cause his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. And you cannot divorce yourself from what to do. If this blessing that comes through the benediction is to mean anything at all, it includes not only what you say; it includes what to do.

I hope tonight, no matter where your path may take you from this house this hour, no matter where to may have to go to earn your dollar tomorrow, I hope that when the day is done you will be able to say, And these hours, too, O God, I have offered you. For whatsoever ye do, do in the name of Jesus.

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Sunday, February 24, 1957

Pastor Raymond Shaheen

The sermon is entitled, "Successor to Judas". The text is from the Epistle lesson for the day, the closing verse of the First Chapter of the book of the Acts of the Apostles. "And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles."

I have deliberately asked you to consider today as Saint Matthias Apostle Day even though this Sunday can also be observed as the Second or Third Pre-Lenten Sunday. Why have I done it? I shall answer that question for you by asking you another question? What do you know about Matthias? I shan't blame you at all if you know very little about Matthias, because there is very little that has been reported concerning him. It could well be that not until you came to this service this morning did you realize that Matthias was the man who was chosen to take the place of Judas Iscariot. And perchance all that you may know about Matthias is what I read to you this morning. But I have asked you to consider him now for several reasons, one of which is this: We dare never forget that the Kingdom of God is spread person to person, and that God's best way of spreading the good news is to whisper it into the ear of a man and ask him then to go and tell somebody else.

Let me give you the historical setting. When God saw fit to establish the Kingdom he sent Jesus Christ to this earth. And as Jesus Christ came he went about from village to village looking for men that he might personally select to become the original disciple bearers. He chose this man here; he chose that man there. Twelve constituted the total number of that particular group. They observed Him. He trained them. He had them for two reasons -- one, that they should be with him, even as the carpenter puts it that way, and second, that they should become the nucleus for the entire kingdom, and especially once he had returned to heaven. You know also what is a matter of historical reference (?), that one of them, Judas Iscariot by name betrayed Jesus, and after he was aware of the terrible thing that he had done, once the dark night of his soul had been set, he went out and committed

suicide. Now the disciples number eleven; once they were twelve, now they are eleven. They go through the agonizing days following the , and remembering the words of their blessed Lord and that in Jerusalem something is going to happen, but you stay in Jerusalem. Keep your company intact. And so for about ten days they sang the hymns, they prayed, they meditated, and then one day one of their number -- of course, it was Peter -- Peter stood up and said, The thing has gone now long enough; they ought to keep the circle. Somebody should be named to take the place of Judas Iscariot. And after he had spoken to them for a while -- and he had a right to speak because surely he knew something about the necessity for choosing the right person -- they decided that they would keep their circle. And after they had prayed and prayed and prayed, two men were nominated, Joseph Barsabas and Matthias. They continued to pray and then they cast lots and you know, of course, that Matthias received the most votes and so he was chosen.

Now I have come to ask you two questions this morning on the basis of this record: Why in the world was it that they were reckless enough to make a choice? Why did they assume such daring as to believe that they could select someone to be numbered with the original group? Don't you suppose they had reasoned among themselves, Jesus had twelve. You remember what happened to us. We said a lot of nice things to him, but when the falldown came, where were we? And each in turn, I suppose, began to hang his head in shame. Then they remembered the darkest of all the things they had experienced. You remember what happened to Judas Iscariot, even one of the original group of us, who sold himself into the hands of the devil? If that is what would happen to somebody that is chosen to be a member of the disciple band, why do we think that we are qualified then to choose somebody? If Judas in our thinking could be catalogued as a mistake, do we think that we can do any better? If one chosen by Jesus Christ should turn out to be a Judas, isn't it presumptuous for us to think that we can choose, if that is the risk we have run? Why in the world, I ask you as the first question, do you suppose they were ever reckless enough, bold enough, to select somebody to take the place of Judas Iscariot?

And there is a second question that comes to my mind -- And once he was chosen,

why do you suppose Matthias accepted? Why do you think for a single minute of those irritating questions that must have gone through his mind -- Ah, they want me to come in now, second string. If I wasn't good enough in the beginning, if I could not have made the first string, why should I accept this appointment now on this latter day? Isn't that the way some people would reason? If I had not been good enough then -- after all, the man has some pride -- I shall not accept. Why do you suppose Matthias accepted the appointment? He could have reasoned that way.

He could also have reasoned this way: Why should I take it? Me, fool enough to take the place of Judas Iscariot? Don't you think that I realize how I will be ^{haunted} hunted everywhere I went by the reports of the man I would be succeeding? I would never be able to stand on my own, haunted always by the whispering voice -- There goes the man who took Judas' place -- and it would not be a complimentary thing they would be saying, for human as ^{they} ~~it~~ would be, they would be saying to themselves, If Jesus Christ had chosen Judas Iscariot, and Judas Iscariot turned out the way he did, what reason do we have to believe that this man chosen by the disciple band is any better? You won't find me touching Judas Iscariot with a ten-foot pole, and you won't find me travelling with his successor either. Don't you suppose Matthias reasoned that way with himself. "Everywhere I go they will say, 'There is the man who took Judas' place' and I will never be able to divorce myself from my predecessor."

Beloved, let us put a parenthesis (?) in this sermon right at this point. Let us reckon with the fact now that everyone of us is cast in the role of a predecessor. Someone has said that once we reach the age of thirty, we are predecessors, all of us. We have a job that someday will be taken by somebody else. We become parents, perhaps, and we are preceding our children on the pathway of life. They are going to come after us. They are either going to benefit or suffer by the name that we give, by the type of people we are. Isn't it an uncomfortable thing to recognize the terrible fact that there are people who come after us and who cannot be divorced from what we are and what we have done? There was Matthias, successor to Judas -- successor to Judas -- successor to Judas. He could never escape it, and he had the toughest,

perhaps, of all the assignments given to the disciple band -- one chosen to take the place of a betrayer. It is difficult enough to take the place of someone who enjoyed the good reputation, somebody who was a good man. It is a terrifying (?) thing to live up to the name of somebody who has gone ahead, but to prove yourself better than a failure is not always an easy thing. But make no mistake about it, at all, my friends. So Matthias might have reasoned -- They want ^{me} to take the place of Judas's. I will always be handicapped, no matter where I go. They will always associate me with him. (The end of the parenthesis).

Now to get back to the main part of the sermon: Why do you suppose they made the choice? Why do you suppose Matthias was willing to accept? Good questions deserve a good answer. I honestly hope that the answer I am about to give you may be a good one.

Beloved, we must realize that the kingdom of God does not depend upon human choices. The Kingdom of God, thank God, does not depend upon human frailties. Judas Iscariot, although chosen by Jesus Christ, was still a human being. And the kingdom of God will not suffer for long because of one human failure. The kingdom of God must be expanded. It goes on, if not because of us, then despite us, as the disciple band must have fully realized when they were in those ^(?) tremendous hours together in that upper room. There is something about this that is going to go on just the same even though we have a Judas, even though we have a disciple band that became for Jesus Christ. And, my friend, that is something that you and I must constantly remember. The Kingdom of God must go on despite human failure. And because that is true, they prayed and they prayed and they prayed that despite their frailty, the choice which they would make would be a choice that would be acceptable to Jesus Christ. That is exactly why Matthias accepted, because it seems to me, if I read his mind aright, he must have felt that God was putting his stamp of approval upon his choice, and when Matthias answered and accepted the assignment, he was ^{answering} ~~accepting~~ God and not just the disciple band.

My friend, in any decision that we make we must always remember that as

Christians there is only one place where the decision is to be made and that is upon our knees, and when Matthias said, Yes, he said Yes to God, and when he looked up, he looked beyond the frailty of the disciple band to the power and strength of an unfailing God.

I have a suspicion that occasionally Matthias would have a rendezvous with Judas. It is a healthy thing sometimes for a man to talk things over with his predecessor, if at all possible, and I think on a mental (?) horizon Judas Iscariot and Matthias must have met quite frequently. I think, as I see it in my mind, that one day Matthias must have said to Judas Iscariot not, Why did you do it? But I think he must have raised this question: Tell me, Judas, tell me, Judas, Tell me, did you ever go to Jesus Christ, did you ever say to him, 'Jesus, I am not sure of myself. Jesus, I know my own nature. I am frail. It is exceedingly difficult for me to keep myself from beyond the devil's reach.' I think I can hear Matthias saying to Judas, "Judas, did you ever ask Jesus Christ to pray for you? Did you ever ask any of the disciple band to lift you up in the arms of your petition? Tell me, Judas, did you ever say to yourself, I could fail; I could fail. Or were you so of yourself that you lived so superficially, spiritually speaking?"

In this rendezvous that Matthias must have had with Judas, he must have asked -- and it seems to me that Matthias must have reminded himself constantly -- he could fail. I am the successor to Judas and Judas failed Jesus Christ.

Of the two things that you have to say about Judas, you must always say these two things. First of all, he broke the heart of God. And almost equally he broke trust with humanity. And I think Matthias must have kept saying to himself, Judas failed; Judas failed; and I think I know the reason why he failed. He tried to go it alone. He did not confess his weakness. He did not implore Jesus Christ to pray for him. It will not happen to me. It dare not happen, for so great a trust now has been placed upon me to become one to succeed to a failure that I dare not fail.

I cannot tell you what happened to Matthias. He is numbered among so many who simply appear upon the scene and then are gone. What miracles were performed through him, I cannot say. What eloquent sermons he preached declaring the truth of God, I do not know. What sacrificial death he offered his Master, I cannot say. But I can tell you one thing -- It is not recorded anywhere that Matthias, successor to Judas, betrayed his Saviour.

My friend, in a certain sense I have chosen to observe this Sunday deliberately because it can also be said that everyone of us becomes Matthias. Matthias is in every man who becomes the disciple. As the disciple band is increased one generation after another, we all become successors to Judas Iscariot. All of us are called upon to take the place of a man who had failed. Judas Iscariot, I presume becomes the patron saint of all failures. By the very same token it could be said that Matthias becomes the patron saint of all those who keep saying to themselves, I dare not fail.

In a European village, I think it was, criminal to the guillotine to die the criminal's death. The classic expression that has come to us from the sidelines is the echo of the voice of a man who said, There, but for the grace of God, go I. We who constitute the Matthias tradition in our day can say, There, but for the grace of God, I stand. I, too, could have been a Judas. Matthias said, It dare not happen to me, and by the grace of God . Beloved, you and I are successors to Judas. Is this our prayer? God, by thy grace keep me from failing Thee. Next to the prayer for pardon, it could be the most eloquent prayer that you could ever pray.

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Sunday, March 3, 1957

Pastor Raymond Shaheen

The sermon this morning is entitled, "Love on Pilgrimage". It is based, of course, on the Gospel lesson for the day. Let me remind you what I read to you a short while ago from the other desk. Jesus Christ made it known to the disciple band, since they were members of the inner circle, that the time had come when he would have to go to Jerusalem, and his face toward the Holy City. He wanted them to know, if they could understand it, that when they did get to Jerusalem certain things would happen. They would take him; they would scourge him; he would have been betrayed; he would ie; on the third day he would rise again from the dead. While they could not understand these things nonetheless Jesus Christ says, We are going to Jerusalem.

Now to get to Jerusalem they have to go through Jericho, and as they come near Jericho Jesus Christ is confronted by Bartimaeus, a blind man who is begging, and hearing the throngs pass by, he wants to know the meaning of the thing, and he gets this answer, Jesus of Nazareth is passing by; The name, Jesus of Nazareth, rings a bell in his heart, for the reputation of Jesus Christ had already preceded God's Great Galilean. Jesus of Nazareth -- Ah, yes, he is the one who has caused the lame to walk, the blind to see, brought back people from the dead. Ah, if he could do it somewhere else, why couldn't he do it in Jericho; if he could do it for somebody else, why couldn't he do it for me? So Bartimaeus, the blind beggar, must have reasoned within himself. And when he had the opportunity he laid hold upon it and cried, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me. They tried to quiet him, of course, but the more insistent he cried, Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me. The record says that Jesus Christ stopped. Bartimaeus was brought to him. He asked him what he wanted done. He, Bartimaeus, said, I want to see. Jesus performed the miracle. Bartimaeus received his sight. He gets his sight because his faith has made it possible. The net result of the miracle is that Bartimaeus gets up, runs after Jesus Christ, follows him, and the people sing praise to God for this wonderful thing that has happened. Now that is the gospel record, and as I read this, I am constrained to share with you

the gospel truth this morning under the general title of "Love on Pilgrimage", because this tremendous thing that happened in Jericho happened as Jesus Christ was on his way to Jerusalem. He had, if you please, a date with destiny, or if you want to put it this way, a rendezvous with a cross. Or it can be put this way: The time had come when the inescapable had to be faced, and there in Jerusalem God would give to the world an unforgettable picture of love.

But Jesus who was headed for Calvary's hill must always be understood as God in the flesh, and since God is love, this Jesus Christ who goes from town to town and village to village, who now is headed for this rendezvous on Calvary's brow, he becomes, if you please, Love on Pilgrimage.

Now there are several things that come to me this morning that I am in duty-bound to share with you: They have made an indelible mark upon the fabric of my heart and I don't hesitate to reveal them to you. Jesus Christ on his way to Jerusalem is in Jericho. Love on Pilgrimage. But what about this love on pilgrimage?

Observation No. 1: Love knows no schedule. Love knows no schedule. Love keeps no appointment for us. Jesus did not say to blind Bartimaeus, I am sorry; I cannot pay any attention to you now. Nobody has interceded for you. Bartimaeus, do you have an appointment? And in a certain sense (?), God keeps no appointment book. The door of his heart is always open to any man, at any time, under any condition. And love on pilgrimage, even though Jesus Christ has this rendezvous with the cross, he can keep no schedule. He takes care of Bartimaeus in his time of need.

Let me share with you this very homey illustration. Here is the proverbial housewife, and I wonder sometimes if there is anything in all of the world more monotonous than a housewife, daily trying to maintain, one day after another, the status quo; going from one set of dishes in the sink to the next set; gathering up one lot of toys from the floor to the next lot of toys; finishing one meal only to anticipate the preparation of another meal; taking care of one bit of laundry only to know that there is another bit of laundry to come later on. But there are some women who try to do something about it, who try to draw up some kind of a schedule. I will try to get this done by ten o'clock and, lo and behold,

or this may be done by a work of love, because in from the street comes Junior. He has had an accident; stumbled, fallen from his tricycle, perhaps, that pesky splinter in his thumb. So he comes to his mother. While she herself is busily engaged in something else, and while she knows she only has so much time to get so much done, but where in God's is the mother who would say to the crying child, You come back at eleven o'clock and I will take the splinter out, or, You come back at 11:15 and we will dry the tears at that time.

Love knows no schedule, my friend. Love always gives attention to the thing at hand that must be met. Jesus Christ on his way to Jerusalem is going through Jericho and he is confronted by a man who needs something. Jesus Christ takes care of him there and then. Love on pilgrimage. There may be the rendezvous on the hill with the crosses, but in the meantime, it knows no schedule.

The second observation that comes to me is this: Jesus is on his way to Jericho. Do you know that Jericho was one of the loveliest cities in the Near East? Magnificent boulevards, they tell me; fine palm trees on either side; rose bushes seemed as it were almost everywhere; exquisite buildings; fine outdoor gardens; lovely baths -- it was the resort city of the Near East. And invariably when a man went to Jericho, all he could talk about was the loveliness of the city. Jesus Christ is on his way to Jericho. Love on pilgrimage. And the Gospel record records nothing about the beauty of the buildings, nothing about the exquisite baths, about the city -- but the Gospel record records that Jesus Christ is confronted by a blind beggar, and that leads me to the second observation, Love on Pilgrimage -- it knows no schedule; love sees only people. Love is person-minded. One cannot love things; you may like things; you may appreciate things; you only love people. But when Jesus Christ is going to Jericho, there is a man who cried out on his knees, and because Jesus Christ is love in the flesh, he pays attention. He focuses his eye upon .

That is what love is always doing; love is always focusing its eye upon a person. If you want something to keep you on your knees constantly, so to speak, my friend, don't ever rid your mind of the thought that God's eye is always focused on you because God is love. Love is always personal. Aside from the tremendous concept

of pardon, there is the tremendous truth of the Christian religion. God's eye is focused upon me. God is love. Love is on pilgrimage. Love is in Jericho and Jesus Christ looks at a man. Love knows no schedule. Love is always person conscious.

It came home to us so easily, don't you remember, in those late days of adolescence and early manhood when we first discovered the meaning of love. We could not have divorced the feeling we had from a face, from a heart, from a mind, from a soul, from a hand. We were in love, and always when we thought of our love, we thought of her. Love is always person conscious. Love on pilgrimage. Jesus Christ is passing through Jericho. He keeps no schedule; he takes care of the man at once, and because his eye has been focused upon a man, the third observation -- Love on Pilgrimage -- as Jesus passes through Jericho in order to minister to blind (he was) they stopped. Beloved, it takes time to love. It is never done on the wing. It can't be done breathlessly. Love exacts its price.

Jesus Christ was on his way to Jerusalem. He had to take time out to pay attention to Bartimaeus. If I were an artist painting the picture of blind Bartimaeus and Jesus Christ, do you know what I would do? I would always picture Jesus Christ leaning over, stooping to serve. God bending. And I tell you, my friend, the truth that must always be part of your conception of love. A bending over -- a stooping -- a stopping -- taking time. That is why for some of us, we bog down in the practice of the Christian religion. We don't find it easy to bend, to stoop, let alone to stop.

Love on Pilgrimage. Jesus Christ going from Jericho to Jerusalem takes time.

There is another observation that comes to me from this great miracle chapter, the 18th of Saint Luke. Love on Pilgrimage.

Let us go back over it again. Love keeps no schedule; love is person conscious; love is willing to stoop to serve. And this one, my friend, Love knows no short-cut.

It is significant that Jesus wanted to go to Jerusalem; he had to go by way of Jericho. There was no short-cut to the Holy City, and I submit to you by the very same authority, there is no short-cut to Calvary's brow. There is no short-cut on

the road that is called love. We are an impatient lot. We like to think there could be a short-cut. My heart bleeds for certain people who come to the Pastor's study. They bring their problem -- an accumulation of the years. Not just a week, not just a month, and sometimes the only thing that I can do for them, the only thing that any pastor -- the only thing any counselor can do -- is not to take a magic wand --- and in this age of miracle drugs, there seeps over into people's mind the desire to have something work a magic influence on their souls so they cross the threshold of a counselor's as soon as they go back the whole word will be transformed. Sometimes the most that some of us can do for any person is to assure him there is no short-cut to recovery; that the thing that they will have to realize is that patience is part of love; and what they should ask God for is a little time until this thing can be worked out. I have marked up on the fabric of my heart the tragedies of some people who try to find a short-cut -- the only answer that love itself can give, there isn't a short-cut. By the very same token, I can rejoice at times when I recall certain people who have sweated the thing out and waited patiently, but nonetheless firmly, knowing full well that even love cannot have a short-cut.

There is another application of that truth that ought to register with some of us who are parents. Unwittingly, we say to ourselves sometimes, Yes, we have our friends, and the children are growing, but there is so much I want to guarantee for them when they grow older, so in the meantime, I will give all that I have by way of encouraging and concern to getting ahead. I will work for the promotion, will plan for that extra home in the country, all of these nice little things that we ought to have, and I will work towards that end, and then when we get these things, then perhaps overnight, I can make up and give them the love and devotion at a more convenient time. My friend, I submit to you this morning, there is no short-cut. Step by step the journey must be taken. Day by day, and week by week, and month by month, and year by year. Jesus Christ on his way to Jerusalem had to go through Jericho. There was no short-cut.

And the next observation that comes to my mind, and this is the last in these

observations when I remember Jesus Christ in the flesh going from Jericho to Jerusalem is this:

I don't think there is ever a moment but what Jesus Christ was terribly conscious of the fact, of the thing, that was going to happen to Jerusalem. There on Calvary's ^{cruel} hill the world would get the unforgettable picture of God's love. And Jesus must have kept saying to himself, I will show them what love is like. That is what was going to happen on Calvary's Hill in Jerusalem, but in the meantime, Jesus was in Jericho, and he is nonetheless loving in Jericho.

That is the thing, my friend. Love on pilgrimage at any point on the journey is never less than love. You cannot say, One week from today I shall be loving and kind and gracious, ^{therefore today} so it makes little difference how I love. Love in the Christian concept is never less than love under any condition, under any circumstance. How do you account for the fact, except by this, that Jesus was able to win so many converts (?) to the Christian cause when they were people who met Him casually, and it came to pass that as he sat by Jacob's well this woman came to him and he ministered to her -- Matthew -- Zaccheus -- catalogue the saints, many of them were touched by Jesus as he was on his way to some other appointment. For the simple reason that love in the heart of God is never less than love at any point. And I submit to you this morning that the only love that you may have in your heart is the love that you can put to work right now. And the only religion a man has is the religion of the present moment.

Love on Pilgrimage. Jesus Christ with his rendezvous on Calvary's Hill passes through Jericho and is stopped by blind Bartimaeus. And all that happened at Jericho makes me remember, Love knows no schedule. Love sees only people. Love will stop in order to stoop to serve. Love can know no short-cut, and love at any point on the pilgrimage is never less than love.

There is an English novel, they tell me, written by Jerome K. en-
titled, Third Floor Back. It is a story of the stranger who wandered in from the streets of London, seeking a place where he could stay, and the only vacant place in the lodging house they had was the third floor back, a very undesirable spot, but he takes it nonetheless. He ~~the~~ stays there for some time. The author in the novel

tell us that after a while there is a transformation that takes place in that lodging house. The stranger in the third floor back gets to talking with these people who have been living there, soiled creatures of humanity. He sits down; he shares their problems; he touches their hearts and their souls. And the net result is that after a while men who were prone to live lustful lives discover that they have lost their appetite for that sort of thing. People who ordinarily sat there in that cheap lodging house and talked about the obscene side of life no longer find themselves easily talking about that sort of thing. The author says, And it all came about because a stranger on the third floor back touched their lives. they could no longer go back to what they had left. The only way open to them was the better way, the high way. Novels are always poor . But I tell you this morning that that is the way it stacks up for some of us. We, too, have met the stranger from Galilee. He has found us in the cheap rooming house of our lives. And when we met Him he has never been less than God's gentleman (?). He has never been less than God under any circumstances, and for us it has made all the difference in the world. We could never again be what we were. The only way is the way ahead.

That is what happens, beloved, when you confront Jesus Christ, God's walking, yearning heart always on pilgrimage, and never, never less than God.

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ST. LUKE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
Silver Spring, Maryland

Invocavit, The First Sunday in Lent
March 10, 1957

This morning's sermon is the introductory one in a series based upon the general theme, "A Study in Temptation." Sunday by Sunday during Lent, we shall refer to this Gospel Lesson for the First Sunday in Lent, the fourth Chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew. This morning's sermon is entitled, "When the Devil Comes", and the text is a portion of the third verse of this fourth Chapter of Matthew, "And when the tempter came to him, he said..."

With all my heart, I believe it must have happened this way. It was one of those last days before Jesus would have to go to Calvary. The opportunities that he had for the disciple band were fast coming to a close. There was so much yet to tell them, so much that they ought to know. He who knew not only them but also the circumstances that would surround them once he would be taken, seemed in duty bound to speak against their terrible day of temptation when they would be tempted to say that they never knew Him; when they would be tempted to run away; when even one of them would be tempted for thirty pieces of silver to sell him body and--so it would seem--soul as well; when they would be tempted in the agonizing days of loneliness without his friendship: I think against that time our Blessed Lord must have called them aside in some quiet opportunity and told them about his experience with the Tempter.

You see, this happened with Jesus Christ alone. Now, that's not at all unusual; temptation is always a personal thing. There are some of you who will never know how the diabolical influence makes its attack against my soul, even as in my relationship with you I may never know just where the spot may be that the devil will seek to make his greatest attack against your soul. Temptation is always a personal thing, and in the life of our Blessed Lord, He had the temptation experience. They knew nothing about it at all, but because He loved

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them and because He wanted everything that happened to Him to benefit them, He spoke to them about temptation; and that they should understand, He gave it to them in about as graphic and as vivid a way as He could possibly do. He gave Satan to them as a person. He gave Satan to them as one who would speak. He gave them Satan as one who would come back again and again and again. He painted for them, as best He could, an unforgettable picture of the experience of temptation as He knew it. Isn't that a comforting thing for you? It comforts my soul to know that even Jesus Christ had His encounter with the devil.

That leads me to put down as Observation Number One that temptation is something that is common to every man. If Jesus Christ had to face the Tempter, who am I to think that I can escape him? If I were to lay any charge against my parents, and I hesitate even to say this to you (and after all, who among us would charge his parents with any kind of failure; for they still have given us so much, no matter how much they might have denied?), but if I were to charge my parents with any failure as far as my soul is concerned, I would have to take them to task for not marking upon the fabric of my heart in no uncertain way this matter of temptation. The temptations that came to me so quickly, especially once I became a minister of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, almost found me totally unprepared. Oh, it might have been that they thought, these precious parents of mine, that this one son of theirs who had given himself to the ministry of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Wearer of the Cloth, that he would be immune to temptation, that God would just automatically protect him; if he would be willing enough to serve God, then God ought out of all kindness and out of all respect to such devotion automatically protect him. Foolish notion! Temptation is an experience which is common to every man, and I have a way of believing that the more a man strives for sainthood, the more difficult his time of temptation because Satan, it seems to me, is always after the soul which is difficult to get.

I read this Gospel record, I say to myself, "Jesus Christ was taken by the tempter," therefore I read with profit the words that appear in the New Testament in some other page, "There hath no temptation taken you but what it is common to man." So I begin at that point, my friend. Temptation is an experience which is common to every man. I shall find myself better prepared when the devil comes if I know in advance that I am on his calling list. We ought to begin at that point. Every man undergoes temptation. The Scripture puts it this way: "When the devil comes", not if he should come, not if perchance he should find you; "When the devil comes".

Now, since he does come, and to every man, it is a good thing to be prepared against that day by having the right philosophy of temptation, and the Christian church has something to speak at this point. Temptation in the Christian sense is always a testing, a trial. Maybe this will help you as it has helped me.

The old Arab tentmaker, when being charged to make a very special kind of tent that, perhaps more so than any other kind of tent, would withstand the feverish rays of the sun and withstand the cool and bitter winds of the desert by night, when being charged with so great responsibility, the old Arab tentmaker would reach for a particular skin and with his hands and his fingers--ah, his word for it was akin to the word "tempt"---he would tempt it, if you please; he would stretch, he would try it to test its strength: not to destroy it, not to tear it, but to see what it would withstand. That's what temptation is; it's a putting to the test, the undergoing of a trial. It's a healthy thing to keep that in mind when you discover that you're being put to the test. Call it by its rightful name: I am undergoing a testing period, this thing that's called temptation, and that's exactly what it was in the life of Jesus Christ.

It's a profitable thing for you to read sometimes the passage of Scripture

that goes before the text. Those concluding verses in the third Chapter of Matthew tell about the baptism of Jesus Christ, how when God's imprimatur was placed on Jesus Christ, when the dove descended from Heaven, when the voice was heard to say, "This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased". Now it can be known, now it can be declared, this is Jesus Christ, Son of God. And Jesus Christ now is completely and perfectly aware of His mission. And the next, mark you, the next episode in His life, the very next episode in His life, so we are given to understand--forty days, forty nights in the wilderness, the testing period, the trial, the temptation.

Well, there are two things for you to put down in your book. Temptation is an experience which is common to every man. Temptation shall be considered as testing, ascertaining one's strength.

There's something else to be declared. When the moment of temptation comes, at that moment one is either prepared or is not ready. Now, that's a matter of great significance. If each of us is on the devil's calling list, when the attack is made we shall be vulnerable or invulnerable according to our preparation. I like to think that those who came this morning to kneel to receive the Blessed Sacrament received the sinew for the spirit which will enable them to withstand the fiery darts of the devil in a way that they might not have been able to face temptation, had they not come. I like to believe that each of you who has marked the path that leads to this holy place right now is receiving a kind of strength that if you had not come, you would not have had. I like to think that every time you read the Scriptures, every time you pray your prayers, you are building up a stronger fortification to withstand the onslaught of the Tempter. The early church was perfectly correct, and I hope the day will never come when it will fade from our life, when within the walls where people came to gather, they would commission an artist for either a mural or some type of fresco that he would depict on the

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wall so people could see some Biblical scene and as they would look upon that scene, they would remember the Biblical character, they could concentrate by the eye upon Jesus Christ that these images, these pictures that remained in their minds, once they had gone away from church, and even the recollection of that very thing would fortify them against the devil.

Every sermon, I suppose, to a degree is autobiographical, and I suppose every sermon that's considered most helpful is the sermon that becomes autobiographical for you, in which you can say as the Quaker said, "He spoke to my condition." I have never taken lightly the responsibility of the pastoral ministry. I have never come casually to this desk, and I firmly believe that when a man stands up to preach, he should not so much give his people a listing of arguments for this thing or against that thing, as it should be standing at this desk the baring of his soul in which he allows his people to catch some glimpse of his encounter with the truth of God. And out of whatever backlog that has accumulated in these years that God has allowed me in the ministry, I come here to this desk again and again, mindful of the responsibility to say something under God that may better gird a soul to withstand evil. What do you suppose I am doing on my knees before I come to this desk? "God, speak the truth. Use me as an instrument in Thy hand by which their souls shall receive some ministry."

And I am terribly conscious right now that here within these walls there are those who are so young; tender, fragile children of God who in so short a time ahead will find themselves doing business in no uncertain way with the devil. Always the choice that has to be made, for the good or the evil, the chaste or the impure. This marvelous thing called life, the choice of a mate, the choice of a vocation or profession, and always the risk to choose the less good. When the time comes and the great moment, they like the rest of us will find themselves either prepared or unprepared. You notice I said "they like the rest of us".

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We never completely have done with the devil. I am so glad that one time I stumbled upon that television drama entitled "The Shadow of the Devil", the story--do you remember, I told you once about it?--the story of a woman who made up her mind to turn the page and become a better person, only to discover that she could not breathe freely forever, that always she was being haunted by the shadow of the past, always being haunted by the devil, the devil that cast its shadow even to the very gate of Paradise. And there's good ground for teaching something like that. How do you explain Gethsemane if not the awful moment of the Tempter even there in the shadow of the Cross before Jesus Christ takes the last great step, even there the moment of temptation to try to find some other way than God's.

And when the moment of temptation comes--what did I say?--we are either prepared or not. Dwight L. Moody did not mean to be facetious; he was just a great soul, that's all, and he was blunt, but one time there were some people who took him to task because he was on a ship that was in danger of being wrecked and a group of the passengers got into a little huddle and began to pray in that great moment of danger. And Dwight L. Moody did not join them, and when they took him to task, he simply replied, and very bluntly so, "I'm prayed up". Not that he was making light of people who would turn to God at any time; simply to say that long before that moment he had made his soul ready to face any emergency.

When the devil comes--he's most certainly going to come to you, my friend--and when he comes, you're either ready or not. This is one of the purposes of Lent: to help us deepen the spiritual life, to fortify the soul, to be able to say "no" to the devil and always "yes" to God.

My friend, I have to tell you this, I cannot keep it from you. In reality, I ought not to have to tell it to you at all; you ought to know it. When the devil comes, you cannot fight him singlehandedly. That's why he tries to find

you alone; he things he can, but as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we have an ally, Jesus Christ Himself. And it seems to me He shared with His disciples this whole matter of the temptation experience for just that reason. He withstood the devil and He's saying to us, "In your time of trial if you will but look to me, I will be with you and I will help you." It's the only combination that I know of by which the devil can be routed and, blessed thought, He's yours! He's mine! We know it!

Sermon preached by Raymond Shaheen at 11:00 a.m. service
Transcribed from tape by Ruth Doak

Sunday, March 10, 1957 -- "When the Devil Comes" -- Pastor Raymond Shaheen

This morning's sermon is the introductory one in a series based upon the general theme, "A Study in Temptation". Sunday after Sunday during Lent we shall refer to this gospel lesson for the first Sunday of Lent, the 4th Chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew.

This morning's sermon is entitled, "When the Devil Comes" and the text is a portion of the 3rd verse of this 4th Chapter of Matthew: "And when the tempter came to him, he said * * *."

I believe it must have happened this way: It was one of those last days before Jesus would have to go to Calvary. The opportunities that he had for the disciple band were fast coming to a close. There was so much yet to tell them; so much they ought to know. He who knew not only them but also the circumstances which surrounded them once he would be taken, seemed in duty-bound to speak against the terrible day of temptation when they would be tempted to say that they never knew Him, when they would be tempted to run away, when ever one of them would be tempted for thirty pieces of silver to sell him body -- and so it would seem, soul as well; when they would be tempted in the agonizing days of loneliness without his friendship. I think against that time our Blessed Lord must have called them aside in some quiet opportunity and told them about his experience with the temptor.

You see, this happened with Jesus Christ alone. Now that is not at all unusual. Temptation is always a personal thing. There are some of you who never know, there are some of you who will never know, how the diabolical influence makes its attack against my soul even as in my relationship with you, I may never know just where the spot may be that the devil may seek to make his greatest attack against your soul.

Temptation is always a personal thing. In the life of our Blessed Lord he had the temptation experience. They knew nothing about it at all. But because he loved them, and because he wanted everything that happened to him to benefit them, he spoke to them about temptation. And if they could understand it, he gave it to them

in about as graphic and about as difficult (?) way as he could possibly do. He gave Satan to them as a person. He gave Satan to them as one who would speak. He gave them Satan as one who would be coming back again and again and again. He painted for them as best he could an unforgettable picture of the experience of temptation as he knew it. Isn't that a comforting thing for you? It comforts my soul to know that even Jesus Christ had his encounter with the Devil.

That leads me to put down as Observation No. 1 that temptation is something that is common to every man. If Jesus Christ had to face the temptor, who am I to think that I can escape him?

If I were to lay any charge against my parents, and I hesitate even to say this to you -- and afterward, who among us would charge his parents with any kind of failure, for they still have given us so much, no matter how much they might have denied. -- but if I were to charge my parents with any failure so far as my soul is concerned, I would have to take them to task for not having marked upon the fabric of my heart in no uncertain way this matter of temptation, the temptations that came to me so quickly (?) especially once I became a minister of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, almost profoundly (?) totally unprepared. Oh, it might have been that they thought, these precious parents of mine, that this one son of theirs who had given himself to the ministry of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, the wearer of the cloth, that he would be immune to temptation, that God would just automatically protect him; if he would be willing enough to serve God, then God ought, out of all kindness and out of respect, ought to automatically protect him. Temptation is an experience which is common to every man, and I have a way of believing that the more a man strives for saving, the more difficult his time of temptation because Satan, it seems to me, is always after the soul which is difficult to get.

As I read this gospel record I say to myself, Jesus Christ was taken by the temptor and, therefore, I read with promise the words that appear in the New Testament on some other page, "There is no temptation that has taken you but what is common to man." So, I begin at that point.

Temptation is an experience which is common to every man. I shall find myself better prepared when the devil comes if I know in advance that I am on his calling list. We ought to begin at that point. Every man undergoeth temptation. The scripture puts it this way: When the devil comes; not, if he should come; not if perchance he should find you; when the devil comes.

Now since he does come, and to every man, it is a good thing to be prepared against that day by having the right philosophy of temptation, and the Christian Church has something to speak (?) at this point. Temptation in the Christian sense is always a testing, a trying. Maybe the devil has helped you as he has helped me.

The old Arab tent maker when being charged to make a very special kind of tent that perhaps more so than any other kind of tent would withstand the feverish rays of the sun and withstand the cold and bitter winds of the desert by night, when being charged with so great a responsibility, the old Arab tent maker would reach for a particular skin and with the fingers of his hands he would tempt -- he would tempt, if you would please; he would scratch it; he would try it to test its strength -- not to destroy it, not to tear it, but to see what it would withstand. That is what temptation is. It is a putting to the test; the undergoing of a trial.

It is a healthy thing to keep that in mind when you discover that you are being put to the test. Call it by its rightful name: I am undergoing a testing period, this thing that is called temptation. And that is to you in the light of Jesus Christ.

It is a profitable thing for you to read sometimes the pages of script that goes before the testing; those concluding verses of the Third Chapter of Matthew tell about the baptism of Jesus Christ, how when God's imprimatur was placed upon Jesus Christ, when the dove descended from heaven, when the voice was heard to say, "This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased"; now it can be known, now it can be declared, "This is Jesus Christ, Son of God" and Jesus Christ now is completely and personally aware of his mission.

And the next mark, the next episode in his life, the very next episode in his life, so we are beginning to understand --- forty days and forty nights in the wilderness -- the testing period, the ~~trying~~, the temptation.

Well, there are two things you are to put down in your book: Temptation is an experience which is common to every man. Temptation ~~is-an~~ shall be considered as a testing to ascertain one's strength.

There is something else to be declared. When the moment of temptation comes, when the moment of temptation comes, at that moment one is either prepared or is not ready. Now that is a matter of admittance (?). If each of us is on the devil's calling list, when the attack is made we shall be vulnerable or invulnerable, according to our preparation.

I like to think that those who came this morning to kneel to receive the Blessed Sacrament, receive the _____ for the opportunity which will enable them to withstand the volley darts of the devil in the way they may not have been able to face temptation had they not. I like to believe that each of you who marked the path that leads to this Holy place right now is receiving a kind of strength that if you had not come, you would not have had. I like to think that every time you read the scriptures, everytime you say your prayers, you are building up a stronger fortification to withstand the onslaught of the temptor.

The early church was perfectly correct, and I hope the day will never come when it will fade from our life, when within the walls where people came to gather, they would commission an artist for either a mural or some type of fresco that he would depict on the walls ~~for~~^{so} the people could see some biblical scene, that as they would look upon that scene they would look upon the biblical character. They would concentrate with their eye upon Jesus Christ that these images, these pictures would remain in their mind once they had gone away from church, and even the recollection of that very thing would fortify them against the devil.

Every sermon I _____ to a degree is autobiographical, and I suppose every sermon that becomes most helpful is the sermon that becomes autobiographical for you, in which you can say as the _____ said, "He spoke to my condition". I

have ^{never} ~~no~~ taken lightly the responsibility of the pastoral ministry. I have never come casually to this desk. And I firmly believe that when a man stands up to preach, he should not so much as give his people a listing of arguments for this thing or against that thing as it should be standing at this desk, the baring of his soul in which he allows his people to catch some glimpse of his encounter with the truth of God. Out of whatever background that has accumulated that God has allowed me in these years in the ministry, I come to this desk again and again, mindful of the responsibility to say something which under God may better gird a soul to withstand evil.

What do you suppose I am doing upon my knees before I come to this desk? "God, speak the truth. Use me as an instrument and by thy hand by which thy souls shall receive some ministry". I am terribly conscious right now that here within these walls there are those who are so young, tender, fragile children of God, who in so short a time ahead will find themselves doing business in no uncertain way with the devil; always the choice that has to be made for the good or evil; the chaste or the impure; this marvelous thing called life, the choice of a mate, the choice of a vocation, a profession, and always the risk to choose the less good.

When the time comes, and the great moment, they, like the rest of us, will find themselves either prepared or unprepared. You notice I said, "They, like the rest of us." We never completely have done with the devil.

I am so glad that one time I stumbled upon that television drama entitled, "The Shadow of the Devil". the story of the woman who made up her mind to turn the page and become a better person, only to discover that she could not breathe freely, that always she was being haunted by the shadow of the past (?), always being haunted by the devil, the devil that cast its shadow even to the very gate of paradise. And it is good for teaching something like that.

How do you explain Gethsemane? If not the awful moment of the temptor, even there in the shade of the cross before Jesus Christ takes the last great step, even there the moment of temptation, you try to find some other way than God's. And when the moment of temptation comes, what did he say, We are either prepared or not.

Dwight L. Moody did not mean to be facetious; he was just a great soul that was loved, but one time people took him to task because he was on a ship and in danger of being wrecked, and the group of passengers in a huddle began to pray in that great moment of danger. And Dwight L. Moody did not join them, and when they took him to task, he simply replied, and very bluntly so, "I am prayed up." Not that he was making light of people who would turn to God at any time; simply to say that long before that moment he had made his soul ready to face any emergency.

When the devil comes, as most certainly he is going to come to you, my friend, and when he comes, you are either ready or not. This is one of the purposes of Lent -- to help you deepen the spiritual life to fortify the soul; to be able to say "no" to the devil and always "Yes" to the God.

My friend, I will have to tell you this: I cannot keep it from you. In reality I ought not to have to tell it to you at all; you ought to know. When the devil comes you cannot fight him single-handed. That is why he tries to find you alone. He thinks he can. But as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we have an ally -- Jesus Christ himself. It seems to me he shared with his disciples this whole matter of temptation for just that reason. He withstood the devil and he is saying to us, In your time of trial, if you will but look to me, I will be with you, and I will help you. It is the only combination that I know by which the devil can be routed, and blessed thought: He is yours; He is mine. We know it.

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Sunday, March 17, 1957 -- "The Temptation to Doubt" -- Pastor Raymond Shaheen

This morning's sermon is the second in the series in the general theme, "A Study in Temptation". This sermon is entitled, "The Temptation to Doubt". Sunday after Sunday during this Lenten-tide we shall go back to the 4th Chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew, which is the gospel lesson for the first Sunday in Lent, that from this experience and the temptation in the life of our Blessed Lord, we should receive something that will hold us in good standing when ours becomes the encounter with the devil.

The text is a portion of the third verse of this 4th Chapter of Matthew, "And when the temptor came to him he said, If thou be the Son of God * *" I think that is the way he must have put it -- raising a doubt, insinuating something in the very tone of his voice: If thou be the Son of God.

We must remember where this temptation experience happened in the life of our Lord, and also why Jesus told it to his disciples. You may remember as you read the gospel record that after Jesus had prepared for thirty years, the divine imprimatur was placed upon him; there was the great experience of the baptism; there is the descending dove from heaven; there is the voice of God that declares faith upon Jesus Christ. This is the culmination of the growing awareness on the part of Jesus Christ that he is God. Even in that early day when in the temple he could say to those who came looking for him, "But don't you know, I must be about my Father's business?" Year after year Jesus Christ was growing in the knowledge of the great pattern as God in the flesh. Now there is no question at all -- Heaven itself declares it. Jesus knows it fully, perfectly, completely.

But no sooner had this experience taken place than Jesus Christ finds himself alone in the wilderness, forty days and forty nights undergoing temptation. Now, please don't forget what the Christian understanding of temptation is. It is not something that God allows to happen to us in order that we should be disappointed, in order that we should fail. Temptation is the experience that God allows that through this

testing we might not only realize our weakness, but our strength as well. And after Jesus Christ had gone through the glorious exaltation of the baptism and hears the voices from heaven, now the testing period! What happens after the mountaintop experience when a man is left to himself to reflect upon a glory that has come and should not pass? So the devil comes, and the devil raises the question: Are you sure? Are you sure?

That must have been one of the reasons why Jesus shared this temptation experience with his disciples. He who knows everything, he who knows human flesh, was very much aware of the fact that before too long now they would be undergoing a great testing. Some of them would not be equal to it. One at least would betray him; one would deny; all of them would run away. And then when they would see Him hanging helplessly upon the cruel tree, when his lips would not move, his voice could not be heard, his limp hand could not touch, then, then they might say to themselves: Can we trust what we do? Can we now believe what he once told us? Can every glorious experience that we had with Jesus Christ remain with us even now?

He knew the time of their tempting. He knew how Satan would come again and again and speak when they could not walk by his side and raise the question of doubt. You are aware of it -- of course you are -- that this raising of a question is Satan's chief weapon. If only he can cast some doubt, if only he can sow some seed of suspicion, he has made a definite entrance into any man's soul.

Jesus Christ gives in the recital of this temptation experience nothing but the bold, bare outline. Why don't you join me now while I make bold to fill it in a bit?

"If thou be the Son of God", I think I can hear the devil saying to Jesus, "I know you are fresh with this glory. I know that your face is radiant, having beheld the face of God. But remember who you are. You came from Nazareth, didn't you? You are the son of Joseph; you are the son of Mary. Who do you think you really are that you could honestly think yourself the son of God, if you are? Think of the stock from which you have stemmed. What was Joseph? A carpenter. Nothing more; nothing less.

He began his life at a carpenter's bench and there he is now; there he . He didn't travel much. Who do you think you really are, if you are the Son of God?"

Likewise, I think the temptor must have come to Matthew and to Bartholomew, Simon Peter, John, James: "Who do you think you are? Matthew, remember your past -- can you really trust the experience that you had with Jesus Christ? Who do you honestly think you are that God would choose you to be a follower of Jesus Christ and then expect you to carry on the kingdom after Jesus Christ is taken back into Heaven, if you are what you think you are? If you are?"

There is always the temptation to doubt. How was Jesus able to withstand this wicked dash (?) of the devil's wand? May I suggest two answers:

I think, first, he must have remembered the validity of his own experience. He had seen his Heavenly Father's face; he had heard his Heavenly Father's voice, and he would not allow himself to forget it. He went back time and again to relive that glorious moment of exaltation. It was stamped indelibly upon the fabric of his mind. It happened to him; he knew it, and he would not allow the glory of that great hour to grow dim. When Satan comes and says: If you are the Son of God, Jesus Christ was able to withstand the dart of the devil because he kept pitting against him the validity of his own experience as he knew it.

The second answer is that he knew the experience of other people in their relationship with God. Jesus Christ rooted and grounded himself in the scriptures. He knew how God had behaved with other folk; he knew how God had acted ; he knew what God had done for other people, and on the basis of God in the lives of other folk, on the basis of God in his own soul, he brings this knowledge to this particular situation and he withstands the fiery dart of the devil, tempted as he was to doubt.

I am of a firm conviction that for some of us God becomes very, very real to us here within the walls of Saint Luke Church. If I did not believe that, I would not want to return here on another Sunday at all, but I keep coming back here again and again as God permits me because I believe this, the experience on a Sunday morning

within these walls can become a highly rewarding experience for us. But I must also recognize the fact that sometimes when it is all over, when Monday comes and Wednesday and Friday, the devil may vex your soul and say, 'Oh, That Sunday morning when you sang those hymns and prayed those prayers and listened to that sermon and waited (?) in the fellowship of believers, wasn't it highly subjective? Wasn't it that way because you wanted it to be that way? Wasn't it a highly emotional thing? Can you trust the health (?) of your soul because of something like that?' When Monday comes and Wednesday comes and Friday comes, and this Sunday morning especially is pretty well removed from your soul, and there is no visible sign by which to be sustained in your hour of trial and in your hour of testing, you, too, may be prone to doubt and wonder if it is as *genuine* (?) as you now under God at this very moment sense it to be.

There is always the temptation to doubt when one is by himself, and especially when one cannot easily discern the lines of love upon the face of God and when one with difficulty cannot feel the gentle pressure of his hand upon one's ~~shoul~~ shoulder. Satan delights in finding you and me like that because then we can become weak, but the stalwart ones in the kingdom have always been those who have gone on believing in God no matter how hostile the world, nor how hidden the hand of the Lord may be. Satan wins his recruits by claiming those who will not follow unless they can always see, who must have at every turn in the road some clear and certain sign. But isn't it true that the only ones who arrive at any great port are the ones who travel by the compass called faith? And I have come to believe rather fervently, howbeit at one time with some hesitation, that while God deals patiently with people who doubt, I am now convinced it is very risky to believe that there could be a Doubters' Gate into Heaven, for as long as a man continues to doubt, he becomes so much for the devil. And that is the devil's chief attack against your soul.

My friend, the devil will never have done with you. He is especially desirous if he knows at all that you have a spiritual awakening, if God has been speaking directly to you. And when he makes his approach to your soul, the first door by which

he seeks to enter is the passageway called "Doubt". In your loneliness, in your sorrow, in your suffering, he will come to you time and again and he will say, "If you are the child of God, why must you be lonely, why must you suffer, why must you sorrow?" In your failures, in your fears and in your frustrations, even though you would have had an experience with God directly, the devil will come and his technique is always the same. "If you are a child of God, why are you afraid? Why do you fail? Why do you have one frustration after another?" He will always be tempting you to doubt.

I do not know how you may evaluate that hymn we sang just before the sermon, but this I would suggest to you: That you consider it in a very high and important manner because it becomes the recital of a man's struggle with the devil, and especially that stanza where the devil is pictured as one who is always tempting us, always goading us, always raising questions about this thing, about prayer and fasting and trying to be good, and then the writer of the hymn says: Christian, Answer boldly. And that is exactly what Jesus Christ did when he was tempted to doubt the validity of his own experience and the smile of God's favor upon his soul -- he was able to answer boldly. Can you do likewise?

In that spiritual diary which everyone of us ought to keep, what are the things that you can jot there without hesitation and without reservation? What are the things that you believe most fervently, come wind or weather? What can you answer boldly when the time of temptation comes?

Let me tell you quickly, my friend, as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ you ought to say without hesitation, I believe in God. I know that he is good. I know He is great; I know He is gracious; I know that He loves me; I know that He will never leave me or forsake me.

David Livingstone went to Africa with more than an ordinary burden of any man, with an arm half gnawed by the lion, weakened by the fever, always facing the hostile savage tribes, seeing his mate wither away into death, one struggle after another, and all the time seeming to make such little progress for the Saviour. And

when he was tempted to doubt the integrity of his mission, he kept coming back to his favorite text from the New Testament: I will never leave you; I will not forsake you; I am with you always. And David Livingstone said this: I must believe; I will not doubt Him; it is the word of a gentleman and he is to be trusted.

You and I perhaps will never undergo one-half the temptation that David Livingstone knew, but nonetheless, in the face of any temptation to doubt the plan, the purpose or the presence of God, will you be able to answer what you ought to know?

The temptor came to me. If you believe that God can save people from their sins, you of the clay of the earth, you so prone to succumb to temptation, do you honestly believe that God can use you as an instrument in his hand? The temptor came to me and says, Do you believe that God has made you capable to love people into the kingdom of heaven?

I don't suppose there is ever a single Sunday but what I come to this desk, shaking off the clutch of the devil who goads me and says: What right have you to stand up and tell these people, This is the truth of God? Who do you think you are, anyway? If I were to focus my eye upon him, and my eye upon him alone, I would never draw near this sacred desk. There is no substitute for the validity of experience directly with God in which the mark is placed upon you and by which you go back again and again and again and relive the experience that Satan with all his strength shall not shake you.

Once I walked in that old square in Prague, that glorious city in Eastern Europe. I felt as though I had almost come to a prayer meeting as I recognized that I was standing in the shadow of that glorious statue of John Wesley ^{HWS}, that magnificent character, if ever I have read about a magnificent character. And as I stood there I recalled something of the legend associated with the man. He had made bold to declare the truth of God and there were people who doubted him, and did everything they could to make him doubt the validity of his own experience. Without success so far as the endeavor to get him to change his mind and recant, they decided to tie him to a stake and they would throw at his feet his manuscripts and his books,

And as they the flames kept leaping around his body and they tell us when John Wesley died, he died laughing at the folly of men who thought they could ~~not~~ go on doubting the truth of God, laughing at the folly of men who thought they could burn up the idea, destroy the truth indelibly marked ,upon one man's soul.

Christian, Answer boldly when the devil comes and tempts you to doubt the fact that you are a child of God. If you cannot answer boldly, take my word for it, you are in for a terrible field-day with the devil.

And Jesus said when the temptor came he said, If thou be the Son of God, and I said to him, It is written, it's written on your heart by God's hand. It is the only thing I know that can make the devil turn his back on your soul.

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THE FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

*"The Temptation
To Free Man's Hand"*

March 24, 1957

The general theme for these meditations these Sunday mornings during Lent is a study in temptation. Perhaps before you came this morning, you read that passage of scripture which serves as the basis for each of these Sunday morning sermons. Let me read it for you again and as I read it, would you permit this observation. Perhaps our Blessed Lord never laid bare his soul to his disciple band quite as completely as when he gave them this glimpse of his struggle with saintdom.

Matt. 4: 1-11

This is the recital on the part of Jesus Christ himself to his disciple band of his struggle with Satan. This is the great laying-bare of his soul. Why did He do it? Perfect love always wants to share. Perfect love always wants to give. It does not withhold. And every single experience that He had He seemed constrained to share with them. He loved them that much. Because He loved them, He wanted to forewarn them against their temptation experiences, and perhaps they could benefit from the struggle that He had. And so I believe that He told them these things that when their great hour would come with Satan, when they would have to do business on the Devil's ground, they would know how to keep themselves from succumbing.

You are not forgetting, are you, where this temptation experience fits into the life of Jesus Christ. It is highly significant that you ought not to forget that the temptation experience came almost immediately after that great moment of exultation when, at the age of thirty, Jesus Christ is given to understand perfectly and completely that His life is to be equated with God. Having been baptized, the dove descends from heaven and the voice from Heaven declares "This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased". And Jesus Christ, in this great moment of exultation, without reservation, without hesitation, knows Himself now to be God; knows Himself now to be God's perfect and complete word to humanity. In the face of this great exhilaration, the temptation experience comes to pass. I have no authority for it except this restless mind of mine that raises questions

pro and con now and then and I find myself saying, surely the disciple band must have come to Him and said "You are different. How do you account for it". Maybe on occasion He told them about this great experience with the declaration of the voice of Heaven - this certainty now, this awareness and, I think, one of the disciple band must have said "Jesus, what was your reaction to it when you had this marvelous experience of exhilaration and exultation - what did you think of it? How did you react?"

Do you remember sometimes, my friend, when you have become perfectly aware of something? Some great moment when you have gotten a glimpse of truth and you know it to be so; or perhaps when once, in the whole drama of life you found yourself alone on the stage, the curtains having been pulled, and you come into an awareness of something, a role that is yours to perform and only yourself to perform; that moment, that sublime moment of falling in love, when you become so aware that this is it, she is the one, when you know that only the heart can experience and the lips can tell - these great moments of awareness, of identification? Maybe it is because some of us have experienced these things that we are prone to wonder how Jesus Christ must have answered the questions that must have been raised - "Jesus, what was your reaction to this exhilaration, this exultation, what was your reaction to this moment when you become identified with God and you know yourself to be God's perfect and God's complete and God's final word to humanity?" If I know the mind of Jesus Christ, at all, I think it must have been this: impatience, my friend, impatience. Now that I know that this is God's way for mankind, now that I know that I am His Messenger, let me be on with it. Let me proclaim it. Let the world now be one - let me proclaim it; a terrific measure of impatience. Now that I know, let the world know at once, without delay. Illusions that we pull out from our own threads of experience are always frail and so partial and one hesitates to share them, especially when they are personal. But in a certain sense, I don't mind. Why should I hesitate to lay bare my soul to a people I have come to love under God's shepherding grace? Let me tell you this: I remember when it came to me in no uncertain manner that I would

give my life as a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is what I would be to mankind. For each long year at college and at theological seminary, I was constantly beset by this fever of impatience. God was laying something upon my heart and I wanted to tell it. I wanted a people to shepherd. I wanted to be someone's pastor. I wanted to take souls one at a time and lead them into the Kingdom and the sooner the better. When I look back over those seven years of preparation, there is only one word that stands out over all others - impatience. I could hardly wait. If that could be so of a frail human creature such as I, think of the seething impatience of the Christ who knew as none other knew: this is God's only way, this is God's perfect, this is God's complete gift to mankind. So I think He must have been eager to proclaim it and to live it. But now, 40 days, alone, in the wilderness and the great moment of exultation, exhilaration, the realization of identity - 40 days by Himself, - not a sermon having been prepared, not a miracle having been performed - 40 days without a convert; and so the Devil comes to Him and he uses now the subtle temptation. If this is it, why doesn't God do something? The devil comes now to tempt Him to force the hand of God. The lights have been made ready; the chief actor has been chosen - let's have some action now, let's force God to do something. Are you hungry, Jesus? So are the peoples of the world, - the peoples of the world that you came to save. You can't very well save naked souls when their bodies are starving. Let's condition them first. Let's see. The masses of humanity are starving. Look at all these stones. Let's make a banquet table for mankind. If you are God, if these people are God's, if God is a God of Providence, let's make Him show His hand - command that these stones be made bread, - the temptation now to force God to do something, to force God to do something quickly. You want to win the kingdoms of the world, you want them to claim He was Lord and Savior and Master - I dare you to throw yourself down from the temple. In one grand, glorious moment, make the world see what can happen and they will fall down and they will worship you. This is the short-cut. Make God stand by you; make God declare to the world what you say He has declared to you.

The subtle temptation to force the Hand of God to do something and do it quickly. The upshot of the matter is that Jesus Christ does not succumb to temptation because you know very well, even as I do, that our Blessed Lord refuses to ask His Heavenly Father for that legion of heavenly angels to protect Him simply to satisfy Satan. He knows that God doesn't always use the earthquake. He knows that there are times when God does not reach for a miracle. When we are prone to wonder why God doesn't do something terrible and dramatic, we must remember that God is something more than mere power. It is the flimsy follower of Jesus, it is the flimsy follower of God who will not believe unless God always seems to be doing something and when His actions will always be perceptible to the mind of man that Jesus Christ refuses to succumb to the temptation because He knows and He knows perfectly well that even God must have some time to accomplish something. And even God will not take away from man his responsibility to do something about a terrible situation. The hunger in the world - people need to be fed - force the Hand of God when the hand of man is idle? Never. Why don't you ask me to say that again! Force the Hand of God to do something when the hand of man is idle? No. Stones to be turned into bread when all the time God had made the world capable enough to produce bread for every man. It is not the problem that the earth will not produce - it is the problem that man will not distribute. It is the problem that man will not share. But it is easier to tempt God to do something, to throw the problem into the lap of God's responsible concern. It is a temptation to which most of us succumb.

Let me tell you something very, very simple - so simple that you may be prone to forget the truth that is inherent. I am almost ashamed to tell it to you. But it is the story of something that happened in a small community. A calamity had come to certain people's homes in the parish. I have forgotten now the details but it isn't important whether it was flood or fire but several people in the parish had their homes demolished, destroyed, and the well-meaning Board of Deacons in the church said, this is an emergency. It should be a time to pray. So they called a meeting.

of the Board of Deacons, in which they would confront God with their emergency, unwittingly allowing themselves to think that "God, now this is so great that you should do something." When the Board of Deacons came to pray, they were somewhat perturbed to discover that one of their members did not show up, and as they were passing some unkind remark about him, there was a knock at the door and when the door was opened, outside the door stood the Deacon's son, who said "Pa couldn't come to your prayer meeting but he asked me to bring his prayers and the youngster was drawing a wagon filled with foodstuffs and clothing. How foolish we are to think that even on bended knee we should try to force God's Hand to do something, when all the time God is waiting to see how we ourselves will solve the problem.

It is a vicious temptation, my friend, to force the Hand of God to act when your hand is idle. It is a vicious temptation to force the Hand of God to act quickly when, even with God, time is of the essence. It takes time to win people. It takes time to redeem their souls. It takes a lot of soaking up of the love of God before a man responds.

Out of Sweden there has come one of the finest motion pictures of its kind. It is called "The Great Adventure" and the Swedish photographer who produced it produced it very largely right from the thickets and the woods in his own back yard, so to speak, and when people have seen this miracle of photography, they have said almost to a man "It is the result of trick photography. These things could not have happened just as they appeared on the screen". What they do not know is this: that this Swedith photographer knew the value of time. It took him three Aprils and 72 hours in fact to get one single perfect picture of some grouse fighting in a thicket. He waited 26 hours for a particular animal to descend from a particular tree to get a particular shot. The perfect thing could be had but it just took a little time.

Jesus does not succumb to the temptation to force God's Hand to act quickly because He knows even with God time can be important. How well I know the meaning of that statement. I wonder sometimes if there is a more impatient person in the world than I. So much to be done. So short one's life. Always this straining, this

impatience. The prayer of prayers is no strange part of my vocabulary "Lord, teach me the lessons of an inspired impatience".

So the devil came and said "Throw yourself down. Let's win the world quickly". It took time to win the heart of Peter; it took time to win the heart of Zaccheus; it took time to win the heart of Mary Magdalene and even this world itself did not seem to offer enough time that even Jesus Christ could win the heart of Judas Iscariot.

Be careful, my friend, when on bended knee you become prone to tempt God to act quickly, when all the time God may be just waiting silently, reaching out with His Hand so imperceptible to your eye and only doing one thing: just taking the spiritual pulsebeat of your soul and for the moment, with Him, that could be more important than anything He might do.

The Benediction.

Sunday, March 24, 1957 - "The Temptation to Force God's Hand" - Pastor Raymond Shaheen

"A Study in Temptation" is the general theme for these Sunday morning sermons during Lent. The scriptural basis is the gospel lesson which was read on the First Sunday in Lent. Perhaps you make it a habit of going back and reading again and again this Gospel lesson as we look forward to each succeeding Sunday in Lent. Let me remind you of what these words are, considered by some of us perhaps that great moment when our Lord laid bare his soul to his disciple band as he had not laid it bare before:

"Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered. And when the temptor came to him he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread, and he answered and said, It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Then the devil took him up into the holy city and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith to him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down, for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee; and in their hands they shall bear thee up lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shall not tempt the Lord thy God. Again the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, and saith unto him, All these things will I give you if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan, for it is written, Thou shall worship the Lord thy God and him only shall thou serve. Then the devil left him and behold angels came and ministered unto him.

You are not forgetting, are you, that our Blessed Lord allowed his soul to be laid bare to the disciple band, that benefitting from his experience with the temptor, they might be the better prepared to do battle against him when they would find themselves on his ground. He loved them so much that he wanted to do everything that he could to prepare them against that day when the devil would make onslaught after onslaught against their souls. Neither are you forgetting, my friend, where this whole temptation experience fits into the pattern of episodes in the life of Jesus

Christ. It is highly important that we should remember that this temptation experience came to our Blessed Lord shortly after he had that great moment of exaltation when having been baptized, the dove descends from Heaven, the voice from Heaven is heard declaring, This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased; here ye him. This great moment of exaltation, this glorious time when he was being with God, when the identity is being established, when the awareness of a mission is being unfolded. This great experience of exhilaration is followed now closely by the temptation experience.

This restless mind of mine is so prone to ask questions that come to one that is willing to read between the lines, even of the sacred page, and when I read these lines I find myself asking this question: Did the disciples ever come to Jesus and say: When the dove descended from Heaven and when the voice from Heaven was heard declaring you to be God, pleasing in the Heavenly Father's sight, what was your reaction? Tell us about it Jesus. How did you feel? What did you think?

To each of us in the plan of God there are always those certain moments without duplication -- awareness is the only word that we have for it -- when we become so certain of something; when some of us perhaps find ourselves in the drama of life as the only character upon the stage; and the curtains have been pulled and we ourselves have something to say and something to do; as though for this we are born here for a purpose that none other than each of us can fulfill and we are aware of it. Perhaps it can be likened to falling in love when in that great moment there is the establishment of identity, one soul with another. Of all of the people on the face of the earth, the certainty in one man's heart that this woman is the one, the awareness that comes to each of you, in the very vivid way followed by exhilaration, exaltation. Even so it must have been in the life of our Blessed Lord, this great moment, now acquainted with God, complete identity with God, knowing fully, completely and perfectly that there is one supreme role for him in life.

"Now that it is over, that you have had it, Jesus, tell us, what was your reaction?"

I am willing to believe that if I know the mind of Jesus aright, if I can

think of him clothed in his humanity, howbeit fully, wholly divine, I think he must have said, "I had a seething impatience, a terrific desire at once to do everything that God wanted me to do. If I was born for this end, then let me it immediately to the world. If God wants the kingdom brought into his hand through me, then let me do it at once." I think there must have been this seething impatience on his part to get into action immediately.

It is always a difficult thing to take from our own lives, personal as it may be, human as it may be, something and say, This is perhaps like unto what Jesus felt. But I have done it before and I will do it now; I have laid bare my soul in your presence. I recall when there was the dawning consciousness in my heart that I was to become a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Those seven years of preparation seemed endless. All through college and seminary, I could hardly wait. I knew that God had placed his finger upon me; I knew that I was called to become a pastor. With seething impatience I could hardly go one year after another until I could have a congregation of my own, become a pastor to a particular people, proclaim the good news from a pulpit to which I could go to Sunday after Sunday, to take some folk, one at a time, and under God's grace to lead them into the kingdom -- I could hardly wait. If this is what God had called me to become, let me become active immediately. If that would happen to one frail human soul, if under God that could happen to me -- the disclosure of a mission -- think of what must have been in the mind and the soul of Jesus Christ when it occurs to him, completely now: You are to be God's final end; you are to be the supreme revealer; you are to as no one else before you, as no one else again, the Kingdom of God upon earth.

There must have been that seething impatience, the light has shown from Heaven; the character is chosen; let the drama unfold; get their reaction. And I think with that keen and subtle mind of his, the devil comes now, making this great assault against the soul of Jesus Christ. "All right, you had your great moment of exaltation; you have had your exhilaration; you have identified yourself with God; you know what you are going to be. Why don't you get into action: Why doesn't this God of yours do something right now, quickly? Mark you -- forty days, forty nights, in

loneliness (?), not a sermon being preached, not a miracle being performed, not a being proclaimed -- Forty days and forty nights -- Where is this action? I will tell you what, Jesus. If this is what it is supposed to be, why don't you make God do something. Why don't you force God into motion?

This, this is the subtle temptation to force God, to force God's hand. But our Blessed Lord, you know, refused to ask his Heavenly Father for that legion of protecting angels simply to satisfy Satan. He knew that God doesn't always use the earthquake; he knew that times there are when God will not reach for a miracle. Now, my friend, when you and I are prone to wonder why God doesn't do something terrible and dramatic, we must remember that God is more than mere power. It is the flimsy follower who refuses to go on when God's voice seems to be silent, or when to his eyes the hand of God seems to be imperceptible.

Jesus refuses to succumb to the temptation to force the hand of God -- Why? "Turn the stones into bread, Jesus. Make God do it. If God wants you to win these souls, let us take care of their bodies first. It is how you can save man's soul when he is enhungered. He is human enough to want bread first. Let us feed him then; let us condition him in order that you might the better win him later on. The world is hungry. If God is God, then let God feed him, if God wants him and if God is a God who provides." Does it sound familiar to you, my friend? This should be a temptation that each of us should say is not strange to any of us. For we have our moments when in desperation, even on bended knee, we seek to force God's hand.

"I am good, God. I believe in you. I say my prayers; I try to live a good life. Why are you letting this thing happen to me? Why do you let this thing go on in your world?

I remember the woman who worked as Office Secretary in the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Gettysburg when I was a junior, shortly after the Nazis had got hold, when those awful clouds of a Third World War -- a Second World War -- were so certain. She said to us, to some of us who studied the Bible, I presume you will answer me -- Why doesn't God step in and stop it? She wasn't a stranger to the halls of religion

and what she said, perhaps some of us have said: If God is good, if God loves us, if God is mindful of his world, why doesn't God do something?

Here was the temptation then. Let us force God to act. But Jesus Christ does not succumb to the temptation to force the hand of God for the simple reason that just feeding people and putting bread upon their table is not enough. And furthermore, it is downright vicious ~~to~~ to force the hand of God to act when the hand of man may be idle. Why don't you ask me to repeat it? It is downright vicious to force the hand of God to act when the hand of man may be idle. "Turn these stones into bread. Feed all those hungry people." Well, it so happens that God has made the world that there should be enough for everybody. God, forever protector with his gifts -- it is a world of abundance even as He created it. The problem may not be that the earth will not produce; the problem could be that man will not distribute. And if the hungry should be fed, let those who have take care of those who have not, under God.

I want to tell you a very simple story; in fact, it is so simple that I am almost ashamed to tell it to you. But the truth that lies inherent in it is very significant. In a particular village there had come some calamity. The homes of several parishioners had been destroyed. I can't remember the details, whether it was a flood or fire. And the Board of Deacons in ^{the village} ~~a very large~~ church said, Something should be done now in the face of this calamity. This is an emergency. We will have a special prayer meeting -- as though God himself now will be charged with meeting the situation. When they gathered for prayer, they were somewhat perturbed to discover that one of the deacons was missing, and while they were no doubt saying some unfair and unkind things about him, there was a knock on the door, and when the door was opened, standing there was the deacon's son and he greeted the assembly of deacons with this remark: Pa couldn't come to the prayer meeting, so he asked me to bring his prayers, and the youngster was drawing a wagon filled with foodstuff and clothing. Even a bunch of deacons on bended knee, foolish enough to think that they could force God to do something when God was not prone to act so long as the hand of man was idle.

There is the temptation to force God's hand to do something. There is also

the temptation to force God's hand to do something and for that something to be done quickly, suddenly, dramatically. And God sometimes will not act quickly, nor suddenly.

I wonder sometimes if there is any more impatient person in all the world than the one who stands before you now. So much to be done and so little time. So many souls to be saved for the Kingdom of Christ. Sometimes I ask God impatiently for a little more promptness, for a little more speed. And guilt-stricken, I admit the trouble may be that I am in a hurry and God is not.

The devil came and said, Jesus, Take a short-cut. Throw yourself down. Everybody will immediately proclaim you as the Saviour. And then it is done; with one grand struggle (?) and the kingdom is yours in the hollow of your hand.

But even with God, time is of the essence. There are some things that will never come to pass without the passing of time itself.

From Sweden there has come, they tell me, one of the finest motion pictures of its kind. It is entitled, "The Great Adventure." The photographer took many of these scenes of outdoor life not far from where he lived in the woods and the thickets of his estate, but they tell us invariably when people see the picture for the first time, they say: These marvelous scenes of nature, they are the result of trick photography. But they do not know the facts. Everything that occurs in that great motion picture -- the outdoors -- it occurs just as it actually happened then and there. What they do not know is this: He waited for instance three ; he waited, for instance, seventy-two hours, until he got one particular shot that he wanted -- a grouse fighting in a thicket. The perfect shot. It was there, but it could not be had until the time had passed, until he himself had waited until it would happen. Twenty-six hours he waited in the darkness one time, the sum total of the hours, until he could catch a lynx coming down a tree. People exclaim at the marvel of the photography -- and there it is, because someone was willing to take the time until the thing would actually happen.

Jesus Christ does not succumb to the temptation to force God to act quickly because he knows that even with God, some things must take time. Beloved, look how much time you must have in order to shape and condition your soul. Look how much

little progress he seems to be making with you and with me. It takes time to save a soul; it takes time to change Zaccheus, Matthew, Mary Magdalene; and one wonders sometimes if there is even enough time on this earth to change the soul of Judas Iscariot. Even Jesus Christ, himself,^{so} it seems, did not have enough time to redeem Judas. Or, conversely, even Judas himself ran out of time before he could love his Saviour completely and perfectly.

There is a prayer that I sometimes make, Oh, God, Teach me the lessons of inspired patience. And when I get on my knees, even as you get on your knees, and your prayer may be, God, in my desperation, do something, be careful, my friend, lest you succumb to the temptation to force the hand of God, when all the while that you may be asking God to do something terrible and dramatic, the hand of God may be reaching further and his fingers may simply be taking the pulsebeat of your soul. And that in itself could be more important than everything that God might do at that particular time.

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Sunday, March 31, 1957 - "The Temptation to Grasp by the Devil's Fingers" - Pastor Raymond Shaheen

This is the next to the last in the series of the sermons based upon the general theme, "A Study in Temptation". Each Sunday morning during Lent we have gone back to that Gospel lesson which was read on the first Sunday of Lent, the 4th Chapter of the gospel according to Saint Matthew. It is the record of the temptation experience of our Blessed Lord, spoken by him undoubtedly to the disciple band that from the experience he had with Satan, they might be able to draw some lesson that would hold them in good stead when they would have to do battle on the devil's ground.

Let us remember as we come to this sermon, which is entitled, "The Temptation to Grasp by the Devil's Fingers", that our Blessed Lord had come from the baptismal experience flush with power. I give you those words advisedly and quite reverently. There in that great moment he was made aware that there was something to be performed by him and through him and by none other; that God's kingdom was to be established and that his life could be equated with God. Now he comes to the temptation experience, and we must remember that any temptation is a trial. It is a testing, allowing us to know our strength and our weaknesses at the same time.

Would you believe me if I were to tell you right now that every temptation is tailor-made. The temptations that come to you are adapted to your personality, to your soul, to your temperament; the temptations that I have, for instance, may be they wouldn't phase you one bit, and the temptations that vex your soul, perhaps they wouldn't trouble me at all. But the devil, subtle and clever as he is, seeks to wound us where we are most vulnerable, and he is always making his attack against the things that mean most to us, whatever they may be, and then he shapes and conditions the temptation according to our own individual temperament and personality.

Now the devil observes Jesus Christ. He comes from the baptismal experience. The voice from heaven has been heard, and Jesus Christ gives himself now completely to the performance of his great role as Saviour. The devil knows this, but the devil says, Everyman has his price (?) and every man can be tempted. He may not succumb, but at

least he can be tempted. And Jesus Christ is no exception.

It now becomes the most subtle of temptations against Jesus Christ. If you were Satan, at what part of him would you aim your dart? What type of strategy would you devise? The devil knows these things: First of all, he knows that Jesus Christ has had this great spiritual moment. He knows that God is promising all the power of Heaven. He knows that Jesus Christ has had this great encounter, and I think he also knows that as far as Jesus Christ is concerned, there is no turning back. He will not change his mind. He is to do God's work and God's will. That, I think, the devil knows, so this is what the devil does: He now tempts Jesus Christ to do God's work the devil's way. Very clever; most subtle. And I think the same thing could be said concerning you and me. If we have had any type of spiritual experience at all, if there is anything valid about our encounter with God, most of us are not going to turn our back against God.

My proof I gather from my own life, even as you bear testimony against yourself or in behalf of yourself right now. Think for a moment. When have you ever been really tempted to say No to Jesus Christ? That is, as far as allegiance is concerned. When have you ever been tempted to betray Jesus Christ and to say, I will not follow him. I will throw my label of Christian faith to the fair winds. I will no longer be classified as a Christian. I will make up my mind right now. I will no longer tell Jesus Christ that I am going to follow him. Honestly now, you haven't had to talk that way, have you? Frankly speaking, when did you ever have a temptation when you were going to tell Jesus Christ that you were going to have nothing to do with him in any manner. No, if we have any kind of encounter at all, the thing somehow sticks, if not in its entirety, at least to a degree. And that is why it seems to me that this subtle temptation on the part of Satan can be so significant for us. He may not tempt us to curse God or to throw our Christian label away; or having known something about our encounter with God, he may say to himself, Maybe they won't change their minds about God, but if only I can get them to

serve God my way, then I will have them. That is exactly what Satan was trying to do with Jesus Christ when he came to him and said: The world is hungry. They need bread. Doesn't God want them to be fed? Isn't that God's will? I will tell you what, Jesus, go ahead and feed them. That is God's will, but do it my way. Do it, one miracle after another. Put bread on every man's plate. The world should be fed; that is God's will, but do it my way, by a miracle and always by a miracle. Take away man's initiative; take away his need to work; take away the necessity of distributing these things that man has; take away from him any ethical responsibility. Go ahead, Jesus, feed them, but do it my way. Jesus, you know that it is God's will that everybody should know that you are the master. That is why he sent you into the world. I will tell you what, let them know it. But do it my way. Throw yourself down from the temple. Be the miracle worker, the wizard, superman, be the sensation. It is God's will that everybody should see you; it is God's will that everybody should know you. Let it come to pass my way. My way would be the sensational, the spectacular. Touch people where their emotions are -- that is what I would do. I am always dealing with their feelings. I always have a field day when I can be free to deal with people's emotions. You want to win the world? Sweep them off their feet. That is the way I would do it. Didn't Jesus come to win the world? Isn't that God's will? The devil says, Do it my way. Subtle, this clever strategy on the part of the devil! If I cannot get him to declare himself against God, then I will get him to use my , and if he will be so concerned about my methods, afterwards he will forget about the end. You know what the result would be -- well, that is the devil's strategy, to get people to do God's work his way; to get them to grasp anything by his fingers.

Has it occurred to you yet that when the devil came to Jesus Christ, he was dealing in the very same things that God wanted Jesus to deal with? And in that sense the devil becomes God's greatest competitor. He deals in human souls, noble ideas, worlds to win. But the difference is here: Why the devil deals with these things and what he does with them after he gets them. Oh, that is vastly different than why Jesus Christ deals with these things and what Jesus Christ would do with them. And it was because Jesus Christ refused to succumb to the third assault against his soul,

for said Jesus Christ to you and to me, even as he said it to himself, it is downright sinful, even under any circumstances, it is downright sinful to serve God the devil's way. Now when it comes to making these decisions as to how you are going to serve God and how you are going to do God's work, I must warn you, even as I remind you, that G. K. Chesterton seems to me was absolutely right when he said that for most of us the area of our decisions must be made in that great field of intermediate gray, not always between a black and white choice, but in those various hues of gray, something that is a little less good than something else. And that is where the devil comes to attack you and me.

Take such a simple matter as going to church as an example. Maybe the devil will say to himself, Ah, they call themselves Christians. That means that if they are Christians, they will want to be with Christian people and they will go to Church. Maybe I can't keep them from going to church, but if only I can get them to go to church for a reason that is less good than something else, then I will have them. If I can get them to go to church for social reasons -- it is a good thing to go to church; it is done socially in that community -- let them think along that line. Let them say they go to church because they receive some kind of cultural benefit; even the reading of the Bible, you see, has cultural value. The music in the church is of some cultural value. The interior of the church -- there are certain aesthetic things about it that smack of culture. Ah, let them go to church for cultural reasons. With my own fingers I will propel them, I will push them along. Now that may be all right to go to church for these reasons, but the devil also knows that

as far as God is concerned, this is the best possible reason to bring a man to church than . He should be reminded that he is a son of God,

where the standard (?) of truth should be proclaimed to his soul, where at the altar he should receive the Blessed Sacrament, where he should be told again and again that God loves me and that Christ has died to save him from his sin. The devil says, Let them go to church and always for a less good reason, not the best reason, and the best of all possible reasons is to get yourself right with God and your fellow men. These other reasons may be good, but they are less good.

And speaking of church life, church organizations, says the devil, Let the people get involved in their organizations, let them go to their meetings, but don't ever let them see their organizations as a means for spreading the kingdom of God; don't ever let them see their organizations for their spiritual values. Always let them see the chairman as a person who knows . When you go to your meetings, always go for that reason. Find out why people go, and especially if they go for reasons that are not so very good.

That is the way the devil talks -- Make your decision not so much between good and evil, but always between a good and a less good. And that is the most subtle of all temptations. It is the thing that is always bothering you and me. Sometimes we get on our knees and our souls become bare before us. We are completely appalled to discover how much good we have done in life because we might have been motivated by reasons of pride or selfish interest. And that in itself makes the devil very happy, because anything done in God's name that is less than God's smile of favor upon us, even the means by which it ^{shall} ~~should~~ be accomplished, becomes a tool in the hands of the devil.

Says the devil to Jesus Christ, You want these people, you want the world, I will tell you how to get it. Just grasp and you touch them, and I will tell you something else: You touch them where they are (?). They live by their stomachs. Man is nothing but an intelligent animal. Appeal to them on that basis. I am always taking people where they are and them, and that is just what the devil wanted Jesus to do. Touch them where they are and keep them there.

Sometimes in moments of great clarity (?) it occurs to me that my life, even as your life, becomes better or poorer as we are touched by other people. Someone crosses the path of my life and my life can be transformed. The transformation is for good or for evil and my whole character can ~~be~~ ^{be} the tale. (?)

The devil says, When you touch them, touch them where they are and keep them on that level. Jesus Christ came into the world to touch people, not by the finger of the devil, but by the finger of God, and the finger of God is always at the

point where they can rise to their fullest capability, where they can respond to the
, where they can become better than they are.

In an old curiosity shop there was a dust-laden violin, dust-laden on the shelf because people had come, they had touched it, and then they became disgruntled because no one could get , but one day a master violinist came and he took the old violin, and just because of his touch, with the warmth of the soul and the skill of the master violinist, the music that came from that violin was like the music from heaven. It all happened at the touch of the master.

Jesus Christ came into the world to touch men at the best possible spot where they could respond to all the finest and best; he came to touch men by the finger of God. All that the devil could do to Jesus Christ was to dare him to touch men by his finger, even in the guise of goodness. But Jesus doesn't succumb to the temptation because he knows it is sinful to touch men with the devil's fingers.

I must warn you, my friend, it isn't easy sometimes to tell the very best from something that is not quite so good. I think that is why the devil wears a smile upon his face because he thinks if he can't get a man anywhere else, he most certainly is going to catch him there, because if a man is interested in something good, there may always be the moment in his life when he is willing to settle for something less good.

Jesus Christ said, Be perfect; be perfect even as I am perfect. Strive for the ideal. The devil happened to hear Jesus say that. He will never forget it. His only hope is that you might.

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Sunday, April 7, 1957 -- "When the Devil Leaves" -- Pastor Raymond Shaheen

This sermon is the last in the series based upon the general theme, "A Study in Temptation". Each Sunday morning in this Lententide in Saint Luke Church we have been going back to the Gospel lesson read on the first Sunday in Lenten and the sermons each Sunday morning have been based on the fourth Chapter of the Gospel according to Saint Matthew. This sermon is entitled, "When the Devil Leaves". Let me refresh your mind on this 4th Chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew:

"Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an-hungered. And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple. And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down, for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him again, It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord, thy God. Again, the devil taketh him up unto an exceeding high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them; and saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then said Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan, for it is written, Thou shall worship the Lord thy God, and him only shall thou serve. Then the devil leaveth him, and behold, angels came and ministered unto him."

You know -- of course, you know that Jesus was alone when this temptation experience took place. spoken directly to the disciple band with this temptation experience they might find something by which they could profit, something which would hold them in good stead when the tempter would come to them.

I think they must have listened breathlessly as Jesus Christ recited this temptation experience. It may have been that one night when they were very much by

themselves, Jesus might have said, I will not always be with you. The time will come when you will look for me and I will not be there, but let me tell you a thing or two. When the devil comes I want you to be able to profit from my experience. With all my heart, I believe that Jesus Christ recited for his disciples his experience of the temptation that they in turn might be able to do battle against Satan.

We know, of course, how it ended. I think it might have been for the good of the disciples as they heard Jesus Christ give round after round, and encounter after encounter, one subtle attack after another. They must have awaited for the time. How will it end? Will Jesus be able to make the devil march. And how thrilled they must have been when the recital of the temptation experience on the part of Jesus Christ comes to that dramatic end when the devil leaves Jesus Christ and the angels of God come and minister to him.

Jesus Christ as he recites this temptation experience puts light (?) to that diabolical statement made by Oscar Wilde, for Oscar Wilde said, The only way to get rid of the temptation is to yield to it. Jesus Christ says by his own experience, That is not true. You can make the devil march. You do not have to succumb. There may come a moment when the devil will leave you.

Now on this Sunday when we come to the last sermon in this series, I want to share with you something that has been in my mind. It seems to me that the disciples may have said to Jesus after the temptation is over, What did you make of it? In fact, if I should have been there I think I would have put this question to my Blessed Lord and Master: How do you evaluate that whole temptation experience? And maybe he would have said, First of all, it impressed me in this way, That temptation comes to every man. Everyman may have to face temptation. I am the Son of God. I must not accept it. I had to face temptation, too. And when we think of temptation, maybe it is a healthy thing to think of it in this way -- that no one will be free from temptation and that man is speaking rightly when he says that no man gets very far in the universe (?) of life who has not first been by a temptation experience. So maybe Jesus would have said to us that it occurred to

me that every man will be tempted. I was no exception. We have to face temptation.

And the second thing he might have said to us is this: Even though we may have to face temptation, we do not necessarily have to fear. Ah, because we are human we go on praying the Lord's Prayer, "Jesus, Lead us not into temptation" because we are afraid that we will disappoint our Lord and Saviour, but temptation itself does not have to be feared if one realizes what temptation is. It is a putting to the test. It is a trial. And during the temptation experience a man discovers his capabilities, as well as his weaknesses. So Jesus Christ, I think, would have said to us: Every man may have to face temptation, but we don't necessarily have to fear it, and likewise, it could be said that every man could be from the tempter's hand. We do not have to succumb.

I suppose that could be the of this sermon this morning -- you do not have to succumb. The story can end this way. The devil can be made to march. For as the soul of our Blessed Lord remained unfaltering (?) against the onslaught of the devil, even so the evil one departed from him, because Jesus Christ had an ally Satan could never claim. God himself sustained Jesus, and the devil knew that. When a man serves God unswervingly, the devil leaves because the devil, while he may be able to conquer man, by himself, he can never conquer the man at whose side walks (?) God.

There is something that I neglected to tell you in this series of sermons. I should have told it to you earlier -- Jesus Christ, I think, kept telling his disciples about the temptation experience because he wanted them to know he was tempted.

Now in the days when the church was young, the diety Jesus Christ was not a great matter of concern for some people. A matter of great concern was the pure humanity of Jesus Christ because in the Greek or Roman world there were Gods by the dozen and quite often an emperor would make himself divine. So some folks did not concern themselves with the diety of Jesus Christ, but they wanted to find in Jesus Christ a perfect man who could give them an example that they would not have to succumb to the temptation Jesus Christ prove to himself (?) with his own life that a man can be made free from the temptor's grasp.

Jesus Christ has made the devil march because he never forgot that he was the Son of God. Jesus Christ kept focusing his eye upon the purposes of God for his life, and as long as he kept focusing his eye upon God and made God his primary loyalty, the devil had to leave. That is the way to overcome temptation. That is the way to make the devil leave cast himself away by the pulsating moment of great affection put something better in its place.

Do you know the old Ulysses legend? Ulysses comes to that place on the craft where he draws near to the place where the siren would lure the sailors with her song. Ulysses is concerned lest he be seduced. So he ties himself to the mast of his ship so that he will not be free to respond and he pours wax into the ears of his sailors so they would not hear the siren's song. That is one way to keep from succumbing to temptation.

But Orpheus, when the craft came near where the siren was, took his own instrument, musician as he was, and he played to the of his own soul, and it responded to the that he knew, and the music that came from Orpheus made the siren's song cheap (?).

So with you and so with me -- if we would make the devil march, if we would free ourselves from the tempter's grasp, we must constantly focus our eye upon God, for in the final analysis, we either serve God or the devil. And the devil will do everything he possibly can to take our eye away from God, for when he does, he has us in the hollow of his hand.

Then the devil left Jesus Christ and angels came and ministered unto him, for Jesus Christ never forgot that he was the son of God.

There is a precious verse in the Epistle of James, 12th verse, 1st Chapter, Blessed is he that endureth temptation because when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord hath promised for those who love him.

Keep yourself fresh in the love of God; keep yourself fresh in the purpose of God. Constantly renew your abounding loyalty to him and you can make the devil march.

Sunday, April 14, 1957 -- "Triumphal Entry" --

Pastor Raymond Shaheen

This morning's meditation is entitled, "Triumphal Entry". It is based on the Gospel lesson for Palm Sunday. Let me begin by telling you that I frankly confess that as a youngster it always seemed to me that Palm Sunday was misplaced in the calendar of the Church, or what is more, I made bold to believe that even in the Bible it was a mistake to have Palm Sunday before Easter Day. It didn't make much sense to have Jesus Christ offering himself as a king, king of a kingdom that would have no ending, then to go into the Holy City and to have to face the subsequent results of denial, betrayal, arrest, crucifixion, burial in a grave. -- and then Easter Day. Wouldn't it have been much better, I thought to myself, to have Palm Sunday come after Easter Day -- ah, there you would have something! Jesus Christ, conqueror over sin, death and the devil; Jesus Christ with an empty grave behind him -- there he would have something to offer people. They could the more readily accept him as king because they would have proof positive. But for Jesus Christ to go into the holy city on the very week in which he was denied, betrayed, crucified and say, Come, believe me, I am a king -- it must have been a mistake.

But that was a young and a childish mind, and the older I have become, the more I have come to appreciate the perfect placing of Palm Sunday. I have come to appreciate the mind of Jesus Christ which enables me to believe that this is no mistake -- Palm Sunday was part of the divine strategy; it was planned that way. For when Jesus Christ went into Jerusalem on that first Palm Sunday, he offered himself Christus Victo, the Triumphant One. He knew full well everything that was going to happen; he knew how they would deny him, betray him, kill him, put him into the grave -- he knew all that. He knew how the city was going to receive him, hostile as it was. And he made up his mind then when he would go to Jerusalem he would go there as the victor, and the picture they would get of him would be one of triumph.

There is nothing so terribly unusual about that, my friend. If you read the pages of the old testament you will discover that quite frequently a prophet seeking

to establish a particular truth would resort to some type of dramatic presentation. He would act the thing out in the presence of the people -- not necessarily speak it. Jesus Christ had come preaching the Kingdom of God; Jesus Christ had come gathering recruits for the Kingdom of God; Jesus Christ had come in the interest of the Kingdom of God performing miracles. Now the great moment had come when he would dramatize for them the fact of his kingship and the office (?) of his kingdom as he made his entrance into the capital city. It was part of the divine strategy. They should see him as king even before the terrible thing called Calvary would happen.

Now there are several things that loom very largely upon the horizon of my thought when I think of that triumphal entry, and I am writing down at the bottom of my page certain things that seem very important to me. First of all, when I think of Jesus Christ going into the city as Christus Victor, I say to myself, This king is courageous. It took courage to face the people in Jerusalem; it took courage to put yourself right in the very midst of the people who were waiting to kill you. Jesus Christ comes now as the courageous one.

Josephus (?), the ancient Roman historian, tell us that when Jesus was where he lived, Cerpheus^(?) by name, the Romans had the upstarts in Galilee had reasoned among themselves, We have had enough of the yoke of the prisoner (?); let us get rid of them. And they staged what was, for the moment at least, a successful revolt, but it was only temporary. Rome with all her might and her power came and subdued the revolt, and as an object lesson they took two thousand people from that village and secured them to crosses, one thousand on either side of the road, and there they crucified them. Two thousand people -- object lesson! Rome will have nothing to do with those who would establish revolt, who would set themselves up against the empire. Impressionable lad that Jesus was, the thing left its mark, and think you for a single minute that he was unmindful of that when he went to Jerusalem offering himself as a king, knowing very well that his enemies would hold that up as a charge against him. If they could not get Romans (?) against him in any other way, they would be able to say, Look, he makes himself king and we dare have no king but Caesar.

It took courage on the part of Jesus Christ to go into Jerusalem to make the triumphal entry, to declare himself, even in the face of the cross, the victor, but, Beloved, that is the kind of Lord and Saviour we have. not one to cringe, to run away. Ah, think for a minute; think how he might have established the kingdom. He might have established it forever underground -- this little group here and this little group always meeting in clandestine fashion; he might have kept himself in a cloister, always the hunted, always the pursued. But not so Jesus Christ. The storm of hostility was brewing, but he would press himself into the very midst of that storm. This is the courageous Christ who goes to Jerusalem even though he knows that upon the horizon there will be raised the cross. And let me tell you this, my friend, when you look upon Jesus Christ hanging upon the cross, don't you dare pity Him. God doesn't want your pity. This was a deliberate thing on the part of Jesus Christ -- he chose to go to Calvary. And that is no pityful thing on his part, nor should it be on yours and mine as we look upon him. Give God pity never, but as you see him hanging upon the cross out of deliberate choice, the expression of perfect courage, give him adoration. Pity? No -- Adore this courageous Christ who makes his triumphal entry never less than victor -- always the conqueror. And when I think of this triumphal entry I also say to myself, This is not only courage; this is also challenge. They had waited, they had hoped that somehow they could deal with him secretly. They would make him come to terms with them on their ; they would wait their hour. But beloved, can't you catch the significance of it? Here is Jesus Christ exposing himself completely in the very midst of their camp. Jesus Christ is the great initiator; he is the great aggressor. Soon or late Jesus Christ forces himself before every man and will not be ignored, and before every man he lies down the challenge -- Here I am, not the hunted, not the pursued. I am the initiator. I come to you and I will pitch my camp in the very shadow of your souls -- so wonderful is our Christ.

So when I think of that triumphal entry I say to myself, This is not only perfect courage; this is sublime challenge. God in the open; God waiting to be encountered.

There is a simple tale I would share with you now. Back some years ago there

was a man who espoused the Protestant tradition and he said, The evangelical word, the full gospel of Jesus Christ must be proclaimed to every person, and I must go to Ireland with it, and his friends said, To Ireland, never, because of their own peculiar and particular (?) fervence, you would go there at the risk of your life. But he said, I must proclaim the evangelical tradition; I must proclaim the full gospel and the free gospel of Jesus. So to Ireland he went. And in that day there was not this mass communication media whereby you could rent certain time on the airways, radio or television. But rather they would go to the Town Crier and they would procure his services; they would pay him so much and then he would go from one corner of the village to the other and he would ring his bell and in a loud, clear voice he would proclaim the thing that was going to happen. And so this man who was bent on proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ as he knew it, procured the services of the town crier, and the town crier was a coward -- he was afraid to proclaim to the people that here was the voice of the evangelical tradition. But he had taken the man's money and he had an obligation to fulfill, so he rang it rather feebly and with a voice little more than a whisper he would announce the fact that this man was going to preach at such and such a place at such a time, and when this man came upon him and heard the rather cowardly tingle of the bell and the faltering voice, he grasped it from the town crier's hand -- the bell itself -- and went marching proudly through the town and ringing it as vigorously as he could and shouting with a loud, clear voice that at such and such a time, at such and such a place, such and such a man was going to preach to them the gospel of Jesus Christ, and then he ended triumphantly, And I am that man!

Even so, my friend, I behold Jesus Christ, Very God of Very God, Begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, going into the Holy City of Jerusalem, that orbit of hostility, with all the anti-God (?) forces arrayed against him -- Here I am; here I am. I am he.

The triumphal entry is the perfect dramatization of sublime courage, sublime

challenge. What is more, the triumphal entry of Jesus Christ into Jerusalem is the dramatization of the Christian offensive of love. This is how I come to you -- just as I am, offering you nothing except all that I am. Any man who claimed to be a king would come riding upon a charger; any man who came claiming to be a king would come with his battalions, his legions, with all the accouterments of horse and power. Here into Jerusalem making his triumphal entry as Christus Victo rides a man upon a colt. The only thing he has to offer is himself.

So I say to myself when I remembered the triumphal entry, This is perfect courage; this is a perfect challenge; this is love's sublime offering. For love can only offer itself and love's strongest appeal -- and don't accuse me of using cheap phrases when I deal with something as sublime as this, when I say that love's supreme appeal is this -- Here I am; you may have me if you love me. And I would also make bold to say, You may have me if you want me, but you must be mine alone.

Beloved, I tell you that as Jesus Christ enters the Holy City on that day, even so he is seeking to make a triumphal entry into your heart and into mine, for everyman's heart is sacred ground to Jesus Christ. And he comes to establish his kingdom in your heart. He comes to beg a response from you. He will not force his entry. Here I am; I am your God. Here I am; I am your Father. Here I am; I am the triumphant one. Will you claim me? What will be your response? Beloved, if you have yet to answer, delay no longer. It is a king that you keep waiting.

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Sunday, April 21, 1957 -- "Easter is God's Answer" -- Pastor Raymond Shaheen

This morning's sermon is entitled, "Easter is God's Answer", and the text is from the Gospel for the day, the 3rd and 4th verses of the 16th Chapter of St. Mark: "And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away."

If I can think of a hundred reasons why they would not have started the journey to the resurrection garden, I think I could think of an equal number of reasons why once they had begun the journey, they could have turned back. You see, rumor had had its day. These things had come back to the disciple band known as the company of the friends of Jesus Christ. They knew all about the crucifixion. They had heard how the body of our Blessed Lord had been taken from the cross. They had even heard the rumors that there were some people who were afraid that even a dead Christ might be able to work a greater miracle than a living Christ. And they had gone to the authorities and said, Make the grave secure. Be sure that you so seal it that nothing will happen or that even his friends would come and take his body away, and the last situation would be worse than the first.

They had heard these things; they knew that he was dead; they knew he was buried, and what is more, they knew that a stone, a huge stone, had been placed at the door of the sepulchre. Ah, I think there could come to my mind a hundred and one reasons why they would not have made the journey to the resurrection garden. And even after they had begun it, they must have thought to themselves, there must have come many a reason why they should have turned back, and especially when it dawned upon them, What about the stone? Who will roll it away? How can we get in? They still held in their hands the boxes and bottles of the precious ointments. They had a mission to perform and nothing would deter it.

My friend, these women, pious as they were, traveled the pathway that morning to the resurrection garden, a pathway that can carry one of two names -- in fact, use both names that I give you: They traveled the pathway called "Faith"; they traveled

the pathway called "Love" to the very door of the grave. They had come to know Jesus Christ. The night, the dark night of despair, had set it, the agonizing loneliness of frustration. No longer was he with them. Despite their despair and their despondency, the flame of faith was still flickering in the hearts and souls of these women. They could not keep from the grave of Jesus Christ. Perhaps they could not call it by name, but somehow they were willing to believe that there was something yet to be done by God. Perhaps, I say to you, they could not call it by name, but they were people of faith and they believed in the purposes of God even though they might not be able to catalogue those purposes, and faith refused to die in the hearts of these women, and by faith they went to the Resurrection Garden.

One Sunday morning when I was in Jerusalem I said to myself, I, too, will get up at the break of day; I, too, would like to relive -- as countless pilgrims before me have sought to relive it -- something of that first Resurrection Day. There were two strange sounds that I heard that morning -- One was the crowing of a rooster -- significant -- and the other, as I went to the balcony of the American Colony in Jerusalem I heard faintly, and then a bit clearer, the pitter-patter of women's feet. They had errands to perform. There was a mission they had to accomplish very early in the morning. And I said to myself, It must have been this way on that Resurrection morning -- Women at the break of day; women unashamedly, without fear. Weren't they marked? Wasn't it known throughout Judea that Jesus Christ had friends, and wouldn't the friends be branded as criminal as he? Wouldn't they have been "marked" women? But despite all of these obstacles, by faith they pursued their way to the Resurrection Garden, believing that God would have something to speak to them there.

Now there is a word of comfort for us -- We who are pilgrims in life's journey, confronted by obstacles, must always remember that for a man of faith the obstacles are to be encountered, not to be evaded. And the amazing thing is that even when these women recognized the fact that they still had to do business with that stone, they did not turn back, they did not throw their precious bottles of ointments away, they did not exclaim their way, What's the use?

For those of the believing heart, for those who travel by faith, there is only one word, Onward; Keep to the path. has example after example of this

thing -- the world of science and discovery, one heroic example after another. For they who travel by faith keep to the path despite obstacle after obstacle. That is part of the story of Easter, people who travel by faith and stay by the road.

These women who had their rendezvous that day in the Resurrection Garden they also traveled by the pathway called "Love". They had come to experience something that Jesus Christ had left, an indelible mark upon the fabric of their heart, and I think they must have felt that even from the grave Jesus Christ was calling to them. And even though they had stood in the very shadow of the cross and knew that he had breathed his last, they refused to believe that this could be love's final word. They had a rendezvous to keep with Jesus Christ, the true lover, the perfect lover of everyman's soul.

It is the eternal story, my friend, the lover must always meet his beloved. There is always the meeting place, there is always the tryst between the loved and the beloved. If it cannot be the touch of the hand, if it cannot be the whisper of the voice, if it cannot be the glance of the eye, if it cannot be meeting face to face, then the love and the beloved will always meet on the horizon of thought or in the silences of the heart. Love cannot know separation and love is always blind to obstacles. Because these women had known the love of Jesus Christ, they refused to allow anything to keep them from their Saviour. And whatever else you may say about the pathway that they took that morning, you must catalogue it as the pathway of love.

The poet must have caught something of the significance of this thing when he gave us these memorable (?) words:

Alas for him who never sees the stars shine
Through his cypress-trees!
Who, hopeless, lays his dead away,
And lingers not to see the breaking day
Across the mournful marbles play.
Who hath not learned, in hours of faith,
The truth to flesh and sense unknown,
That Life is ever lord of Death,
and Love can never lose its own.

The love that Jesus Christ had implanted in the hearts and the souls of these women could not allow any obstacle to be raised. Out of ~~the~~ devotion to their Saviour they went bravely in the cool of the Resurrection morning.

This is only the minor part of the Easter story, my friend. I have been talking to you most about what you can find in the heart and soul and mind of the person. I have been telling you now about what a human being can offer God, faith and love, but that is only the aspect of Easter. The tremendous thing about Easter is this:

That for those who travel the pathway of faith and love, God is already on the way and will meet them as they journey. For those who walk by the path of faith and love, God is always at work, God is always waiting. And for these women, despite the obstacle that they had to face, walking by faith and love they discovered that God had the answer. And his answer was Easter.

Who shall take away the stone? Who shall roll it away? And God, even as they journeyed, was already at work. This is the tremendous concept of the Christian faith. We who persevere, even with patience travel despite the obstacles, will find in the end that God's hand, strong and sure, is already at work. That is the that I would hold up for you. That is the faith by which the believer can continue his journey through life. And when the answer to your longing may come, the answer will come directly and personally by the hand of God.

No man serves as a pastor and shepherd and bishop of souls for any length of time without recognizing the solemn truth that for everyone of us, no matter what the course may be, that we take in life, there is always some obstacle of one kind or another. And people can be classified into two groups -- those who cringe and become cowardly before the obstacle and those who through faith and the desire to keep a rendezvous with love, go on despite the obstacle.

Beloved, is your obstacle previous failure? Is your obstacle frustration? Is your obstacle loneliness? Is your obstacle fear? Is your obstacle -- of course, it is -- sin? Beloved, travel by faith and travel by love and you will discover that the hand of God is at work and he will take it away.

I must share with you this morning an interesting thing that comes to us about Marco Polo, great traveler and great explorer, who went into strange places and distant countries, who was always wont to come back to his beloved Venice. Once when he returned after a long, long absence, he came back thin, emaciated -- use your adjectives -- frail, haggard, worn, weary, scarcely recognizable by his friends; in fact, not to be recognized at all by his friends. He was seen walking in the streets of Venice, tired old man, carrying in one hand a bag for which he had precious concern. So many passed him by. But one day two people looked at him and when they beheld him, they looked upon him with only the eyes of love, pure, unadulterated compassion. And they invited Marco Polo to their home. As he crossed the threshold of their house, they put before him bread, wine, and fed his body and ministered to his soul, as well. In the course of the evening the tired, weak, frail, haggard man reached for his bag and opened it, and from this bag he drew the rich treasure, the precious gems of a land that they had never seen. It was to these friends who looked upon him only with the eyes of love that he shared his precious store.

Parables, analogies are always weak, but you have caught the significance of it. Jesus Christ, the eternal pilgrim who could not be confined to the grave, may be walking your way. The only ones who will really know, the only ones who will really feel his living presence will be those who reach for a key by which to unlock their hearts to let him in, and that key can be labeled "Faith"; it can be labeled "Love".

This, my friend, is the Easter faith. He is alive -- He is coming your way. You could pass him by -- He won't pass you by. You could pass him by, unless when you look at him, you look through the eyes of faith and a love that is big enough for God.

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Sunday, May 5, 1957

-- "The Good Shepherd" --

Pastor Raymond Shaheen
(11 o'clock service)

The sermon is entitled, "The Good Shepherd". The text is from the gospel for the day, a portion of the 11th Verse of the 10th Chapter of the Gospel according to Saint John. Presumably, the text becomes the words of our Blessed Lord: I am the good shepherd.

One of the things that confronted Jesus Christ so often was this whole matter of communion. How can I get these people to understand what I am talking about? How can I get them to know what I really am? It is the problem, you see, of God on one side; man on the other. The infinite trying to get the finite to understand. The divine and the human. Time and again our Blessed Lord would take the familiar, something that was common in their lives, and then on the basis of that, he would present for them some tremendous, divine truth. You remember when you read the parables, The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto ----- . He is telling them about God's kingdom where God rules supreme in the lives of people, and in order to establish that truth, he has to take something out of their every day life and on the basis of that, he hopes that they may better understand the sublime truth. That is one reason why when we read the pages of the gospel record we are impressed by the fact that so often Jesus would be walking with his disciples and then over yonder on the hillside he would say, Do you see it? Of course, they had seen it before; they had seen it so often! And this figure of a man reaching with his hand into the sacks slung over his shoulder for a bit of seed, scattering it broadside against the hill, Jesus would say, Now that is the way the kingdom of God begins; it is like seed sown in the hearts of men and women. And according to the soil, so the yield may come. But the seed will be cast and the sower will sow it.

Or perhaps he would say to them on one occasion, you remember it, you have seen it so often; Syrian peasant that she is, she carries around her neck this necklace made up of precious coins that her lover, perhaps the family has seen fit to bestow upon her. They are precious in her sight, but one day accidentally one of them is lost, and as she sweeps the floor, she is looking diligently and she will

keep searching until she finds it -- until she finds it, she keeps looking.

Jesus Christ says, ~~That~~ is the way it is with God. God loves all of us, God claims all of us, and if one of us should be lost to him, God keeps looking -- God keeps looking until he finds him. Again and again he would take something familiar to them and base some sublime truth upon it.

Today, known as Good Shepherd Sunday in the calendar of the Church, Jesus Christ takes what perhaps could be classified as the most familiar figure in Palestine, a shepherd and his sheep, as much as to say: You have been wondering what God is like. You want to know what I intend to be to you? I will tell you. I am the Good Shepherd. They must have cherished the thought, even as mankind through the ages cherishes the thought of a shepherd and his sheep. This pastoral thing, so picturesque, brings comfort and solace to any man. That is why the most familiar page in the Old Testament will always be, even in time to come, the page that has on it the 23rd Psalm.

Now if you and I are to understand the meaning of Jesus Christ as the Good Shepherd, then we ought to ask ourselves the basic question. What was the role of a shepherd? What did a shepherd do for his sheep? If this is what Jesus says he is to us, then we had better ask this question.

Let us begin by answering in this way: For the Good Shepherd, and as you read this gospel lesson for the day you will discover how Jesus contrasts himself to the hireling, the man who is not a good shepherd, the man who is just putting in time, the man who does not own the flock. Jesus Christ contrasts himself with that figure and he tells us of the things that the hireling will not do because he does not own the sheep. Well, we begin at that point: A Good Shepherd enjoys what we might rightfully refer to as the pride of possession. These sheep are mine, and I belong to them; they belong to me. You have only to live in the Near East but for a day until you discover that familiar figure, the shepherd and the sheep. You have only to talk to the shepherd but for five minutes until you discover this overwhelming concept of possession: This is my flock. These sheep belong to me.

An interesting thing is this: Blind, dumb sheep, as you may call them, they have a way of sensing the fact that they are possessed and that they belong to someone. Even from the days when the shepherd takes the lamb for the first time, there is something instilled in that animal by way of affection and love and concern, that that lamb that becomes the sheep will not forget. Even so, it has been said it will always recognize the voice of the shepherd, because in the voice of the shepherd there is the sense of compassion and possession. Occasionally there are those who go to the Near East who want to make sport of this matter. And so they will say to a shepherd, Allow me to wear your shepherd's garments and we will see if the sheep will follow me or if they will follow you. a good shepherd's voice is always known by his sheep, and there are those who don the shepherd's garb and they try to make the sheep follow them. And even though in the meantime the sheep may follow (?), but the shepherd speaks -- let the shepherd raise his voice -- and they will follow him, because there is the sense of possession. This is the one to whom they belong, and the shepherd himself is always mindful of it: These sheep are mine.

Now Jesus says, I am the good shepherd, and I know my sheep and am known of mine. Cherish the thought that you are God-possessed. That is what you have a right to say to yourself: Jesus Christ is my good shepherd, and Jesus Christ is telling me when he says that he is my shepherd, he is telling me that I belong to him. And Canon Peter Green is perfectly right, it seems to me, when he says that there is no emotion in religion that is quite as strong as the sense that comes to us that we are owned, that we are possessed by God.

David, shepherd lad that he was, watching his sheep by the silence of the silvery stars, let his face upon this very fact centuries before Christ: These sheep belong to me, and as a good shepherd I will protect them, I will provide for them, and I will care for them, and they will know that they are mine. And then it dawns upon David in the great moment of revelation -- That is exactly the way it is between God and me. God is my shepherd; I am possessed by God.

And In your moments of reflection has it ever occurred to you that down deep in

every human soul there is this terrific hunger to belong to someone? If I were to evaluate for you this whole experience of love, I would have to admit that aside from the knowledge of revelation when you know that between this heart and this heart, and between that mind and that mind, there is something by way of identity; alongside of that is the glorious fact that you become aware of this, that here is someone who has a claim upon your heart as none other in this whole wide world. To fall in love is to be possessed by someone. Isn't that one way of explaining the beauty of the marriage service: And keep thee only unto her so long as ye both shall live? To be claimed; to be owned -- it is the glorious aspect of human love.

I tell you again and again that down deep in the human soul there is this terrific desire to belong to someone. Man is by nature sociable. That is why some people go where they go. That is why some people marry as they marry -- the desire to be possessed in the finest possible sense.

A brilliant British preacher I think gives us food for thought when he evaluates harlotism in this way: He says, The only way I can explain harlotism is that down deep in the heart of every human there is the desire to become important, to be possessed, if only for a few wicked minutes at that.

Jesus says, I am the good shepherd. You belong to me. I own you. I don't hesitate to tell you as the pastor and shepherd and bishop of your souls, there are times when I shudder with the sense of responsibility, that I have been called to be your under-shepherd, undershepherd, under Jesus Christ. For you make a mistake if you think I am -- If I look upon you only as members of Saint Luke Evangelical Lutheran Church. From the first day I came to you, I never thought of you in that day because when I came to you in the very beginning, I said I would be your Pastor. If I am your pastor, then you are sheep; you are God's sheep. For Jesus Christ says to any man who will be ordained as a minister of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, even as he said it to Peter, You must go and feed my sheep. That is how I look upon you. And I do not take the responsibility lightly, for I am constantly charged with the sober thought to look upon any of you and everyone of you always as someone who belongs to God, and no more precious label can be given to any one than to say that

they belong to God. Jesus says, I am the Good Shepherd; as a Good Shepherd you belong to me.

There is in this congregation at this very minute someone perhaps

who will be a servant of the Lord Jesus

Christ. In Africa they refer to her as the "Jesus woman." Once there was brought to her door at night by the Africans a tiny child given up to die. She could have ignored it, but she went and she claimed that child. Why? Because she especially loves these black-skinned natives? Perhaps -- but most particularly because she looked upon this child as someone who belonged to God. And because she serves Jesus Christ, she claims that child in God's hand. Jesus says, I am the Good Shepherd; you belong to me; you are mine.

I said to a friend, Tell me, What does a shepherd do for his sheep.

And he said, A good shepherd will do two things: A good shepherd will always see that his flock is provided for and a good shepherd will always see that they are protected. When you travel in the Near East you are impressed (?) by the fact that during the dry and arid season of the year, you hardly find a blooming thing anywhere. Now it is the responsibility of the shepherd to see that his sheep do not go hungry. He must know where the pastures can be found and that is not an easy task. He must know where the still waters are where they may be able to drink safely. And a good shepherd takes it upon himself to assume that responsibility.

Jesus Says, I am the Good Shepherd -- and the good shepherd provides. And I submit to you this morning that you have a right to believe that God as your good shepherd will supply your needs, too; that God's hand outstretched to you is never empty. There are some folk outside the Christian experience who go through life at a terrific feverish pace, always grasping, always ~~to~~ trying to build up a reservoir, always trying to gain a supply because they are afraid that some day they will never have enough. While God intends that we should be wise and good students, I ask you always to remember that you can trust Him to supply your need when the time arises. It is a mighty healthy thing to believe in the providence of God.

There is a passage in the Old Testament that I like very much. It goes like this: I have been young and I have been old; never have I seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed going hungry. It is not a simple thing when you allow yourself to believe that the hand of the Lord will always provide. Jesus says, I am the Good Shepherd. The good shepherd not only provides, but the good shepherd also protects.

Certain parts of Palestine become the most barren part of the world. I have never seen so many rocks in one place in all my life. Sometimes the shepherd has to take his flock amid those rocks, and amid those rocks will be hiding the hyena, the wolf, the fox, the poisonous snake, and the shepherd, at the risk of his own life, in order to protect his flock will guide them wisely and well. Jesus says: I am the Good Shepherd. I will protect your soul. I will see that no harm or danger can come to your souls.

There you have it, my friend. You wonder what God wants to be to you? You wonder what God is like? Here is the memorable (or did you say, "re-memorable") picture. Here should be the unforgettable portrait. He is the good shepherd, and because he is the good shepherd, he keeps whispering in your ear, I know your name; you belong to me.

And because I believe that so fervently, I hope you have made note of a prayer that I pray so frequently at this altar: Help us always to believe that nothing can cut asunder the bond of love between God and his child.

Do you want to ask me what I think is the most wonderful thing that the mind of man can experience? I will tell you: To realize that we belong to God; that God loves us; that God owns us. Some day when you and I breathe our last, it would seem to me now that the most wonderful thing that we could experience would be the realization that even in that moment, the bond of love between God and his child remains secure. Even the moment of death could be like the rising of the sun and the realization that the bond between God and his children remain.

Honestly, I think that is what Jesus must have meant when he said, I am the

Good Shepherd. I know you; I love you; I will give my life for you.

That is our God for you, my friends. That is our God.

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Sunday, May 12, 1957 --

"The Home in Nazareth" --

Pastor Raymond Shaheen

The second Sunday in the month of May is being increasingly observed as "The Festival of the Christian Home". Even so in Saint Luke Church we observe it now. The sermon is entitled, "A Home in Nazareth". The text is a portion of the 51st Verse of the 2nd Chapter of the Gospel according to Saint Luke: And Jesus returned unto Nazareth and was subject unto them.

The purpose of this sermon this morning -- allow me to tell it to you at the very beginning -- is to enable (?) us to focus our eyes as best we can upon that home in Nazareth, for it is an unfortunate thing that through the years experience, as we get farther and farther away from the times that Jesus actually spent in Palestine, we may begin to think of Jesus as living in a "never-never" world, or in a situation that may be totally alien to the life of which we are a part.

One of the things that made a marked impression upon the fabric of my mind when those four summers ago I walked in Galilee and in Judea, I kept saying to myself -- "And to think Jesus actually lived here; Jesus actually taught here." And horrible thought, "This is where they actually put him to death."

It becomes a very healthy thing for us -- all of us -- to remember, even as the Creed would never have us to forget, " * * * born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontious Pilate, crucified, dead and buried" -- he actually lived; there is a place on the map, there is a place as far as geography is concerned that I can say, This is where he was born; this is where he lived; this is where they put him to death; this is the place from which he arose. It is equally healthy to remember as you turn the pages of history that there is a particular period of time when Jesus was actually here upon earth. We do Jesus Christ a gross injustice when we keep him forever confined upon a pedestal and keep him up in the clouds driving farther and farther away from the actual world of things. That is the point in this sermon this morning, there is one basic purpose to have us focus our eye as best we can upon a home in Nazareth where all of the forces of the home knew their interplay upon his life.

It is a wonderful thing to make this discovery, to know that he actually lived in a home, was subject to his parents, that there was a woman who sang a Jewish lullaby as she tucked him into sleep at night, that there was a father whose hand he clasped tenderly as they walked away to the synagogue, that there were occasions when strictness had to prevail and the child Jesus might have on occasion been given the answer, "No" to something that he wanted to do.

Some months ago it was a very happy privilege of the Pastor of this church to spend about three Sunday afternoons with the boys and girls from the Sunday School departments. We called it, "The Children's Hour", and together we came, a group of youngsters and their teachers and the Pastor, and we talked about God's house; we mentioned the baptismal fount, the lectern, the organ, the pulpit, the altar, the communion rail, the cross, the candles, the flowers, and then before the meeting was over there was something that I thought they ought to understand -- that we come to God's house to get God's message made plain to us. The ministry of music is the endeavor of a particular group of people to bring God's message to us in that particular way. The ministry of the altar, of the sacraments, a particular endeavor to bring God to us through the sacraments. The preaching of the word a particular endeavor on the part of one person by word of mouth and personality to proclaim the riches of the grace of Jesus Christ. Now, of course, I didn't tell it to them in exactly those words, but this is what I did tell them: That when we came to church that if God was not real to us in a number of other ways, he could be very real to some people if they would just use their eyes to look around the church, and here in the stained glass windows in Saint Luke Church is the story of the life of Jesus Christ. By these illustrations the gospel of Jesus Christ, his life, can come to us. By the way, that is one reason why we have stained glass windows. That is one reason why there are murals, and paintings and frescoes in church. The Roman church is very wise on that score, and there was a time when people were very illiterate, so when they came to church, if they could not understand the mass, and they could not understand the sermon -- if there was a sermon -- at least they could look around with their eyes and the gospel could come to them.

Well, with these , before we brought our Children's Hour to a close, we talked about these windows. They were quite fascinated with this one, which is the Christ Child. A baby is always fascinating, and especially to think of Jesus Christ as manger born. And that fascinated them. They were somewhat held tenderly, too, when I pointed to the second window ---- but when we came to the fourth window, I don't think it was just my imagination, but I think they seemed to understand as they had not understood at any of the other windows, this is the presentation of Jesus Christ as a boy, about your age, I said to them, when as a boy he was in the carpenter shop with his earthly father. And I think every last one of them in his or her own way found something in that moment perhaps that they had not quite realized before. If they did, it came in a richer and deeper way: Jesus was once a boy my own age, and could it be that all of the things that concerned them as children, they were beginning to think might have concerned Jesus Christ as a child.

Now that is why I say to you this morning, we who mark today as the Festival of the Christian Home do well to use a sanctified imagination as we focus as best we can our attention upon a home in Nazareth where there were parents charged with the responsibility to rear and train children in love, nurture and admonition of the Lord. And in that home Jesus actually grew up. All that interplay of the (began to play) forces of family life came upon him. Think of it! Thirty years were spent in Nazareth. The preparation that he had for the proclamation of the gospel came to him during those days, those years that he spent at home in Nazareth.

Now as best I can, let me give you a picture of that home, and I think it is fairly correct because, generally speaking, the homes in Palestine haven't changed much in two thousand years. As I walked the streets of Nazareth I remember home after home that I saw. Generally speaking, one-story structures built out of limestone which they got so easily from the nearby . The walls were about two to three feet thick, and the only wood used in the home was the pieces of wood used for the ceilings and the frames for the window, if there would be a window, and for the door. There might be occasionally beams across the roof, and upon the beams, then, would be

placed the mortar -- mud mortar. On the outside would be a stairway which would be used especially in the summertime when people would want to find comfort in the cool of the evening. The floor was dirt inside about eighteen inches, a little bit higher. On the one side of the house would be the sleeping section where the parents and children would sleep, one after the other -- not upon beds, but upon mats, and the only covering would be the covering from the skin of an animal or from cloth. Generally speaking, no table, no chairs, an open hearth, occasionally a chimney on the house, but usually the smoke would have to get out ^{as} best it could. In the wintertime it was cool, or cold or damp, the parents (?) would open the door and whatever livestock they had would find shelter even as his entire family found shelter in that one room house. When they wanted water they went to the village well; they had no utilities. Food was very simple, albeit substantial. Bread was the chief item of the diet. There could be milk and milk products -- seldom meat -- usually olives (?). Two meals a day -- seldom breakfast -- always a noontide meal and the main meal in the evening hour.

Why have I taken so much time to paint for you this picture of this home in Nazareth? The answer is very simple and should be for you very obvious. Simply an endeavor to give you something in marked contrast to your home and mine. This was a house which had the barest of essentials. We have much. Now the important thing about a home is never what you can see or what you can touch. This home in Nazareth proves that point magnificently.

I have given you the picture of a home as far as the physical features are concerned, but now the important thing is that in this home in Nazareth you have two people as a set of parents who while they were poor in the things of this world, they were rich in the things of the spirit. They were rich in the things of God, and Jesus Christ was constantly being exposed to these things -- the things of the spirit. When one talks about that home in Nazareth, you must always remember they were two people there -- Mary and Joseph who loved each other dearly, tenderly and faithfully. Mary was , and the adjective for Joseph is faithful, and when God saw fit to take

from Heaven above the most precious thing he could ever give to earth, he looked around for two people, and the very fact that he chose Joseph and Mary should require no further comment. Whatever else that home in Nazareth did not have, it did have this: A man and a woman who were faithful to each other, who loved each other, who were acceptable in the sight of God. Now in the face of that Jesus Christ was constantly being exposed to the tenderness, the love and the affection, the honesty the integrity and the fidelity that these two people had for each other. That was in a home in Nazareth -- not only that Mary and Joseph looked upon their children with affection and with responsibility; they beheld their children as something God had given them and they brought them up in the Lord's nurture. Mary and Joseph were devoted to each other; they were devoted to the things of God; they dedicated their lives to this family. Jesus -- mark you this -- was constantly exposed to this atmosphere in that home in Nazareth, and the example of his parents left the mark upon his soul that could never be erased.

I would tell you this morning that the example of a parent ought to be, if it isn't, the most important single influence upon the life of a child. You may bring your children to church as you ought to bring them and occupy the family pew; you may expose them to a sermon that is preached from this pulpit, but this sermon cannot possibly compare with the application of the truth of the gospel which the youngster finds in your life on a Monday morning. You may bring your children to us in the Sunday School program and the catechetical program of Saint Luke Church; we will do our best, using consecrated people to teach it; we will use a book; we will turn its pages and your child may well learn the Ten Commandments; he may learn very well certain pages of the scriptures -- but if when he turns his back upon us and he walks to his home and he lives with his father, his mother, his brother and his sister and he should find something in their lives that falls short of what we have taught him, that example is far more effective than anything that we can ever teach or fail to teach.

I have a way of thinking -- and I could be wrong -- but for the moment I believe it sincerely that when Jesus Christ as a youngster went to the school of the rabbis

he was taught the Ten Commandments, he was taught the things of the sacred writings, but when were these lessons indelibly marked upon his life? Listen to me. In nearby Ephraim (?) some five or ten miles away there was a reconstruction taking place, and I am willing to think that Joseph had a contract and together he and Jesus would walk to Ephraim (?) and they would look up and they would give themselves to the building enterprises in Ephraim (?) and, when the day's work was done, I can picture Jesus and Joseph walking side by side the dusty road to Nazareth and as they came back to Nazareth they would be in the company of the men. Like as not some of those men were foulmouthed, and I think even then they must have talked about things that were rude, uncouth and sinful. And I think it must have been by the gentle pressure of the hands of Joseph upon the fingers of Jesus Christ that Jesus was impressed by the fact that this thing that they were saying was not right and that his father, his heavenly father, Joseph markedly disapproved. And that hand of Joseph upon Jesus came to bear. Jesus would understand as Joseph reacted to this smut that this thing is not right. That in itself is far more potent (?) than simply setting a youngster in front of a teacher and saying, Thou shalt not.

I like to think that when men came into the carpenter's shop sometimes they said with a wicked tongue things that were not and they dealt easily and cheaply with other people's reputation. And I like to think that when Jesus looked up he saw the very fire of righteous indignation burning in the eyes of Joseph and that in itself would leave a mark upon the soul of the impressionable youth. I like to think that when he tagged along with Mary to the village well when they would draw water and usually women could do in conversation they might be prone to gossip, tell things that were not true Mary and the child the youngster Jesus walked back to the home, you could tell by the very attitude of his mother that this thing was not right. That was the kind of home in which Jesus grew up. That was the home in Nazareth.

Do you know, my friends, that every in the United States a major crime is committed? Do you know that one out of every six of these crimes is committed

by a teen-ager? Do you also know this? That noted criminologist from Harvard, from his studies that the greatest single deterrent about to commit crime with strictness and with love. In that home in Nazareth there was a father who dealt with the children with strictness and with love. I think there ~~were~~ some things Jesus could not do. There were some places where Joseph and Mary would not allow him to go. They were strict -- but always with love.

This is the sermon that I bring to you today. It is entitled, The Home in Nazareth. We mark today the festival of the Christian home. The purpose of this sermon is simply to paint for you a picture of that home in Nazareth that you may take it by way of contrast and stack it against your home -- even as I now wrestle this day while the sermon is being preached, taking the parsonage with its four people and stacking it against that home in Nazareth. We who have so much; we who lack for no physical comfort -- we ought to remember a home in Nazareth that was bare, but whatever it lacked of the things in the material world, it was exceedingly rich in the things of God. And from that home in Nazareth the carpenter's son went forth to face a world. And glorious of all thoughts, when he talked about Heaven he said, It is going to be like home.

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June 9, 1957

Pentecost

Pastor Raymond Shaheen

The sermon is entitled, "It Could Happen Again". The text is from the Epistle for the day, the second chapter of the Books of the Acts of the Apostles: And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.

Perhaps the prayer that we ought to make today as we celebrate the Festival of Pentecost is the prayer that the old negro was heard to make as he stood reading the words of a tablet commemorating the life of the founder of the Salvation Army. As he read those words paying tribute to that marvelous Christian soul, General Booth, the old negro was heard to say, O Lord, Do it again; O Lord, Let it happen again. Now you know, of course, that General Booth had been an attendant at the established church of his day; that he was appalled by the fact that there was a lack of fire and enthusiasm for the gospel of Jesus Christ. People did not go to church with penitent hearts, and even when the officiating minister conducted the service and read the liturgy, he did it in so routine a fashion. General Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, was praying to God that he would be baptized by the Holy Spirit, that his soul would become a flame for God -- and that is exactly what happened. And if you read the history of England it could be that you might have appraised him in this way, that of all the people in his generation, none made a mark for the kingdom quite as vigorous (?) as General Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, for he turned his back upon a altar, he turned his back upon the ancient ritual and liturgy of the church, and he went looking for only one thing -- a human soul, and whenever he found that soul he made up his mind he would bring to that soul the very spirit of Jesus Christ, so greatly was he baptized by the spirit. He was God-conscious; he saw every man as a child of God.

I once made a biographical study of this founder of the Salvation Army, and I had the phrase for him, a figure of speech, that characterized his life, and I will tell you what it was: He was a straight-shooter for souls. No matter where he went, through the eyes of God he saw everyone as God's children, and he treated them

in the spirit of Jesus Christ. Small wonder, then, that the old negro as he read this tablet that commemorated the life of General Booth said, O Lord, Do it again; let it happen again.

That is the prayer that I have been making for this morning as you and I have come together on this day of Pentecost that marks the birthday of the Christian church, that marks the baptism of a group of people by the Holy Spirit. O Lord, Let it happen again.

Maybe you can't fully appreciate what I am talking about because Pentecost was so long ago, because maybe you don't understand what happened there and then. Let me tell you quickly. Our blessed Lord had told a group of his followers that he was going to go away, but after he would be gone awhile something would happen to them, God's holy spirit -- the spirit -- would come to them, and they were to wait; they were to wait until it would happen. In the course of time this handful of friends of Jesus Christ had experienced a great deal, for a number of days they had been meeting in clandestine fashion, they did not allow it to be known that they had believed in Jesus Christ for he had died, you see, upon the cruel cross. He had died a grim (?) death. But there was something about this holy spirit that made them want to be with other people that knew him, so on occasion after occasion they would get together, but always secretly, and they never whispered the name "Jesus Christ" in public. No one outside of the closed communion of the fellowship of the believers knew that somebody else was a Christian because in these dark and terrible days following the crucifixion they had to keep this worship experience to themselves, and for some of them, it was a difficult task to fan the fire of a spark that once had been ignited in their hearts. But they remembered the words of the Lord that they were to wait, and so they did, and as the gospel they were all of one accord in one place.

Now I must be honest with you. I do not know -- no one exactly knows -- how it happened, but everyone knows that something happened. The tremendous act of God was performed because men and women became -- listen to me -- men and women became completely God-conscious. But they had been what they were, their personalities began

to slip into the background and every single soul was possessed by the thought of God. They were baptized by his spirit, and once they were made aware of that, they went out into the street like mad men. Where they had been silent, they now shouted; where they had met in secret, they now gathered in the market-place; they went everyone proclaiming the grace of God as they had known it, and they began that day the endless procession of witnesses to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Men unafraid; men possessed; men -- if you want a figure of speech that can become an acumen for some of us -- God-inebriated.

Now I must tell you again, I do not suppose anyone knows how it happened, but this is what happened, and when they tried to recall the experience, somebody said, It was like the sound of a rushing mighty wind. Somebody else said, It was as though there were tongues of fire over you. They behaved like people possessed by liquor. I cannot tell you exactly how it happened. But as one who reads the Good Book, even as you read it, this is what we have to say: Everyone there present was possessed by the spirit of God. The only thing they could think about, the only thing they could talk about was God; the only thing they wanted to do was the thing that pleased God. And an historian writing of the early church said that the Christians were the people in that day who outlived any other group of people. They were God-conscious.

My friend, can you appreciate that? A group of people coming together from devious paths; a group of people with all the varieties of temperaments and personalities; a group of people with all their fears and frustrations -- and then being of one mind and of one purpose, they declare the ministry of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It happened! And my soul knows great delight when I stand here to tell you it can happen again. But if it is to happen again then in our day, we must meet the requirements that they met in their day as it happened to them.

Let us take a look at them. They were -- they were the friends of Jesus Christ. They had known Him; they had come to love Him. But when they came together on this particular occasion, they came there out of obedience to him. They were there

because he said they should be there. That is a great mark of discipleship -- obedience. Somewhere in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles it is written, The Holy Spirit came to them who obeyed him.

One wonders what would happen if every Sunday when you and I look forward to coming to church if we would stop and say to ourselves, "Now just why am I going?" It is a legitimate question. Why should anybody come to Saint Luke Church on Sunday after Sunday? It is perfectly fair that I should say to you, Why did you come here now? I wonder if they did not ask that question of themselves on that first ? Of all the places to which they could have gone, of all the things which they might have done, of all the people with whom they could have associated, they saw fit to be where they were. And the reason? Out of obedience to Jesus Christ. If it should come to us as a challenge now, without reservation I would say that is the only primary reason that should warrant our coming here right now. We should look upon ourselves as the Lord's people. We should look upon this house as the Lord's house -- by the Lord's saying, out of obedience to him, we should be here and with one another in order that we might better feel his presence.

This group of people received this day into the fellowship of this Church were told on the very first night that we met as an Instruction Group that as the Pastor of this Church I would encourage them to become members of Saint Luke Congregation for only one reason -- out of respect for Jesus Christ. We are not interested simply in adding another name to a Church register, but if every single one of these received here this day was constrained by the Holy Spirit in the name of Jesus Christ to take this stand, then they have taken it aright. Saint Luke Evangelical Lutheran Church is simply another corner in the of the Kingdom of God. Becoming Lutheran is purely incidental; to acknowledge Jesus Christ and to serve him and to obey Him is primary.

That is what happened on that first day of Pentecost -- if they would have asked one another, Why are you here? Well, don't you remember? Jesus said we should be here. I am here because I am obeying Him. It would be good spiritual discipline

for each of us if on any Sunday morning we would say to ourselves, Why am I going to Church? What a wonderful thing it would be if the answer could come back, I am going to Church because I respect the command of my Lord, Jesus Christ. Beloved, I tell you the truth when that congregation met on that day of Pentecost. They were not coming casually; it was not a congregation made up of people who just wandered in from the street, who just happened to be there. Beloved, they were there decisively; they were there deliberately. This, too, must be said. When they came, they came to a man as people who had a common experience. They were all friends of Jesus Christ. They had all come to know Him and to serve Him in some way or another, and for the most part, they were people who had turned their back against Him; they had denied Him; they had lived in a world for a while without Him. And they had come to reckon with that terrible fact, trying to live in a world without Jesus Christ. That was the experience they had in common. And they had gone through this purifying thing of knowing that even though they had turned their back against Jesus Christ, it was Jesus Christ who had said to them, Come back again. I will see you again. I want you to come.

Can't you see it, my friend, that when they came together there was not a single one among them who found himself more righteous than somebody else. They were sinners to a man, and each one of them had come to look into the face of Jesus Christ and to read nothing but lines of love upon his face. Each one knew himself a sinner, and each one knew himself to be continually loved by Jesus Christ.

If that should be your experience right now, if each one of us here would recognize that the ground upon which we stand in the very presence of God is level, if everyone of us should right now not consider himself just one bit more virtuous than somebody else, think what a tremendous thing could be happening. Sinner, redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ. I tell you a truth, that is exactly what happened on that first day of Pentecost. They were there to a man because Jesus Christ asked them to be there, and when they came together they expected the promise of God to be fulfilled.

And I pause right now to ask you this question: What did you expect to happen when you came to Church this morning? Did you honestly expect to feel the very presence of God? Did you expect to be baptized by the Holy Spirit? They did -- and they were!

The title of this sermon is: It Could Happen Again. I was not there when it happened the first time. I have only the record before me. I believe that it did. With all my heart I believe it can happen again because even in the short period I have spent in Saint Luke Church I have stood in those red doors once the benediction has been pronounced and the service has been concluded and I have been able to detect in the eyes of certain people something that they did not have before they came, and something I am reasonably certain that once they went, they would not lose. Every Sunday can become a kind of Pentecost to the man who approaches the throne of grace as a sinner, who knows that out of obedience to the love of God he can be baptized again and again by the Holy Spirit. It happened there. It could happen again -- even now.

#

Sunday, June 30, 1957

Pastor Raymond Shaheen

The sermon is based on the Gospel lesson for the day, and the text is a portion of the 18th Verse of the 14th Chapter of the Gospel according to Saint Luke: And they all with one consent began to make excuse.

This is no idle table-talk on the part of our Blessed Lord when he replied to a man seated at the table who had made perhaps a rather facetious remark. Now if you are at all familiar with this chapter in Luke, you may remember what happened before. Some of them had been invited to attend a supper and while they were there Jesus, with that intense eye of his, forever sensitive to what was going on, discovered that some of the people were more concerned about the honor that should be given them as individuals than the honor that should be given to their host. And rather humorously the remarks were made about, "Well, maybe you hadn't better sit at that particular place where you think you belong because maybe it rightfully belongs to somebody else. And what an embarrassing situation it would be if you had to take a lower seat because you were so eager to get a more prominent one." Well, that type of thing was taking place at the supper table, and because the tension was as keen as it was, some well-meaning soul said, "What a wonderful thing it would be to break bread in the kingdom of Heaven." A perfectly safe remark -- something to ease the tension -- something to take the minds of these people away from each other. Always a clever device of man, you see, to start looking up to Heaven when you don't want to be too much concerned about earth. "What a wondrous thing to break bread in the kingdom of Heaven." And Jesus said to that man in a kind of "That is what you think" fashion the parable which serves as the gospel lesson for this Second Sunday after Trinity.

Had you been there, my friend, and if you had not known Jesus Christ very well I would not blame you a bit if you would have thought to yourself, His tongue is rather sharp; he is putting people in their places, isn't he? But Jesus Christ is a stark realist and what must be spoken must be spoken; and what must be called by name must be called by name. So to his friend he said, "What a wondrous thing to break bread in the kingdom of Heaven."

Jesus spoke the parable about a man who made a great supper and invited people who accepted the invitation. And when the time came to attend, they begged off; they were not there. To really appreciate this you ought to visit in the Near East. A banquet is really a banquet, and a supper is a marvelous social affair -- and especially in the land or country where ninety per cent of the people seem to exist on a starvation diet. To be invited to supper is really something. Jesus said there was a man who had a supper. He sent out the invitations in advance. The people accepted, and as is the custom over there, when the supper is ready or being prepared the host will send his messenger and then the messenger will bring you to the table. Jesus said, Do you know what happened? When the time came for the people to show up they refused to come. Do not forget, my friend, this is Jesus who is speaking -- God in the flesh who came to tell men of the unbounded blessings of their Heavenly Father, who came to tell men of the goodness and the grace of God. But he is telling these people about a man ,who had made a supper and who invited people and when the time came they would not come, and his reply is to a man who said, It must be wonderful to break bread in the kingdom of Heaven. Because Jesus Christ knows human nature as he does, he is saying, But it doesn't work out that way. People can refuse a gracious invitation; people can ignore their hosts. If it can happen among men -- man to a man -- it can also happen to God. And that is why he spoke this parable.

Now we must pit this parable over against the teachings of Jesus Christ concerning the banquet feast of God. In order to do that, focus your eye for a moment upon these people who made their excuses. Here is the man who had been invited and when the time came to attend, "I pray thee, have me excused. And I will tell you what: I have purchased for myself a piece of ground and I want to go look at it." Is there anything wrong with a man looking at something that belonged to him? You see, for the most part it can be said that for each of these men making the excuse, the excuse seemed reasonable to him. He had a right to want to be excused. This was his ground. And Heaven itself only knows perhaps how he had striven through the years to earn enough money to get this stake on earth. It was his; he wanted to see it.

Again it seemed reasonable.

Here is the man who said, I cannot come because I have purchased for myself five yoke of oxen. Five yoke of oxen, my friend -- no small accomplishment for a man in the Near East. "And I want to prove it." Is there anything wrong with a man taking stock of what belongs to him? Is there anything wrong with a man assuring himself that he has gotten a good bargain? So it seemed to this man, his excuse was reasonable.

Here is the man who says, I cannot come because I have just gotten married. In the Near East where they respect very strongly family ties, a man was given a year off from military duty once he got married in order to establish family ties with his loved ones, with his own. It seemed right and proper to the man who had just been married that his place was with his wife. Is there anything wrong with a man keeping company with his wife?

To each man in turn his excuse seemed reasonable. But the interesting thing is this: To every other man looking at it objectively the excuse was flimsy, foolish and downright ridiculous. To wit, The supper was being served at night. Who goes surveying his ground in darkness? "I have bought myself a piece of ground. I want to go look at it." The excuse was flimsy, foolish, ridiculous. The man who said he had bought five yoke of oxen, "and I want to prove them". Who proves his yoke of oxen after he has purchased them? The evaluation is made ahead of time. One cannot picture anyone -- especially someone living in the Near East where shrewdness and bargaining is always the rule of the day -- trying to ascertain whether or not he had made a good purchase after he had done it. The excuse was foolish, flimsy, downright ridiculous. The man who said, "I have just gotten married". Of all the people who should have accepted the invitation, it was he. He had time on his hands. They would have had a delightful time toasting the bride and groom. Once a person is married in the Near East the celebration goes on day after day and week after week.

I remember hearing my father tell me that when he came to this country and he was married, still remembering the custom in the Near East, they had a wedding celebration that lasted for three weeks in which they were constantly

fed and toasted. The excuse that the man made who had just been married, looking at it objectively through our eyes and through the eyes of everyone else except that man himself, is flimsy, foolish, downright ridiculous.

And when the time came to go to the supper, wonderful and sumptuous as the affair was, they did not accept the invitation. And the reason: They did not want to go. They had something which at that time seemed far more important to them than paying tribute to their host. Our Blessed Lord is speaking this parable. He does not waste his words and always he takes this chapter from time and banks it against eternity. He wants us to understand that a man can run the very same risk of refusing what God gives; that this man who refuses the invitation of his host to attend the sumptuous affair or banquet is the prototype -- a man being offered something by God and the man refuses to accept and then gives an excuse, an excuse looked upon by the eye of God for which you can only have the same adjectives: flimsy, foolish, downright ridiculous.

Beloved, God is always giving. God is always inviting. God is always extending his open hand and saying, Take to yourself. Man, true to type, is constantly running the risk of saying, No, Thank you. But as he says that he makes an excuse and allows himself to think that what he has and occupies his time is of more importance to him than what he can take from the hand of God.

Suppose we look at it this way. (You read between the lines as you see fit; put in as much filler as you may think necessary.) God gives the Church. As I see it there is no blessing known to the society of man as comparable to the blessing that comes to man through the fellowship in the ranks of the redeemed. Here is the Church, the company of believers. Here is the Church, the fellowship of those who know Jesus Christ. God says, You may have it to yourself. I will allow it. I will ask my Son to establish it. And I will bless it to the end that the gates of Hell can never prevail against it. God says, Here; It is yours. And what does man do? Time and time again he begins to make excuse. I may not respond. I may not accept what you offer. I may choose not to participate. And I submit to you, my friend, that there is nothing, absolutely nothing, that can take the place of what God gives to us through the Christian

Church. You are cataloging the excuses that people make, aren't you? One by one? If you don't know it already I hesitate to believe that it is necessary for me to establish it in your mind. I am not speaking sarcastically. If there is one thing that I should ask God to ever keep from me, it would certainly be a sarcastic tongue. But here is the Christian Church proffered by the hand of God, and again and again in many ways a man will make excuse.

I believe this morning with all my heart that if a person came here to the quiet beauty of this holy place, right now he cannot help but be a better person, if for no other reason than this: He has absorbed something of the inspiration that comes through the fellowship of people who, like himself, need the assurance of divine pardon, find it necessary to hear the word of God preached and proclaimed, find it a terribly important thing to tell God that he is a sinner and he wants the assurance of forgiveness, to be able to sing God's praise with somebody else. These things in themselves are blessings here found that cannot be found anywhere else. They may come only, perhaps only, through the fellowship when a man finds himself in the company of fellow pilgrims of the truth. God says, Here it is. This is my Church. This is my day. This is my gift. And again and again man will make excuses.

Take this as an example, my friend. God has given to each of us the precious gift of life. And God says, I will not only give you life, but I will show you how to live it. I will give you Jesus Christ who is the way, the truth and the life. Take Him. He is yours. He will show you how to live. He will show you how to make the most of your life. And what is more, I will show you how to live a life of love, the best possible kind of life. Again and again a man with the outstretched hand of God before him, with Jesus Christ, will begin to make excuse. "No, thank you, God. I am content with what I have, and I am more concerned with staying the way I am."

This is Jesus Christ who spoke this parable. Men were invited to something absolutely wonderful and they refused it, and Jesus says -- if you read between the lines -- "And the very same thing can happen when God invites and when God gives. Men can run the risk of making excuses."

You have lived long enough, haven't you, to have made this observation of life, that people have a way of getting what they want. Generally speaking, people have a way of going to the place where they want most of all to go, generally speaking. Now that is the awful thing about this parable. The people refused the gracious invitation of their host because they didn't want it. What they had for the moment was more important to them. This is where I would put down the full weight of that reasoning mind of yours. You and I run the terrible risk of treating God that way, too. When God offers us something, we might run the risk of saying, "No, Thank you, God. What concerns me now in my own way for the moment is more important."

How amusing (?) can a man's sin become that he can be bold enough to tell God that what he has, what occupies him now, is more important than what God offers, and what God invites a man to take? How much more of a firm grip can the devil get on a man's soul when a man can say to God, "Excuse me, please. I will not take what you give, what you offer. What now engages me is more important."

Beloved, don't ever let that happen to you wherein in the face of God's grace you should be allowing yourself to think that what you have or what you want should be more important than what God would gladly give.

#

August 4, 1957

Pastor Raymond Shaheen

"To Face a Problem" is the title of the sermon. The text is from the Gospel lesson for the day. It is the 5th Verse of the 8th Chapter of Mark: He asked them, How many loaves do you have?

The disciples had a peculiar kind of problem on their hands -- people, people, people, people! It was the year of great popularity. Wherever Jesus went, one miracle after another was the order of the day. The throngs were so great that he was never without a congregation and always people waiting for him where he would appear before them. In fact, the problem was so serious that the disciples were inconsistent with their Master when they requested some opportunity when they could be by themselves. "Isn't there some way, some method, whereby we can resort to some quiet spot? Master, the truth of the matter is this: We can't even eat alone." Always people. Then, somehow it was made possible -- at least so it seemed -- that if they went to a particular spot they could be by themselves. And with eager heart, the Master and his men sought this place of rendezvous. But, lo and behold, when they came to the lonely spot, it was , for already there was a crowd waiting to be greeted by the Master.

A very human reaction would have been this: 'Can't they leave me alone for a little bit? I am -- I am entitled to some privacy. In Heaven's name, what do they expect from me?' There was a limit to what a man can offer. That would have been the human reaction, and I am reasonably certain it was the reaction of the disciples. But this amazing Christ of ours, seeing the multitude -- What does the Good Book say? -- He had compassion on them! Never a time when he was without love; never unduly irritated; never unduly vexed; never unduly disturbed. And seeing the multitude, He had compassion on them, and He said that they should be fed.

There is a problem existing here. Something should be done about it. And, of course, you know what follows. For the Gospel lesson for today is one of those few miracles that appears in each of the Gospel records, and is the miracle that is

known to every Sunday School scholar -- the feeding of the thousands. Now I turn your attention to this historical setting of the scriptures for the simple reason that as one recalls it he can find something that can be very helpful to him, to each of us, for in the study of the performance of this miracle you get a lesson (?) whereby you can face a problem.

Harry Emerson Fosdick, the preacher at the Riverside Church, used to go over to Union Theological Seminary and lecture to our young men who decided to become ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The students who sat at his feet would remember fondly what he told them so often. "Young men," (I think he must have spoken to them in this fashion) "When you stand up to preach, always remember that there is a problem in every pew."

Because that is true, and in the quiet of your own soul this morning, you bear witness to that very fact even though you may not shout it to somebody else, I submit to you that this sermon should be found helpful, for here in the study of this gospel for the day you can find how a Christian faces the problem. The formula that I would give you is^a very, very simple one. You only have to remember three words to face a problem -- Formula: God - Man - God.

Of course, it needs explaining. That is why we shall not pronounce the benediction at this point. The remainder of the sermon must be spoken for the formula must be understood if it is to be helpful at all. Each of us has his own problem, whatever it may be. I am aware of that this morning. I am aware of the problems that I bring always in my own heart, and I like to think that my experience should not be strange to you either. But here is something that a man must recognize when he faces his problems.

Point One: God's concern for that problem. And it should be very helpful to believe that even before you may (?) call the problem by name, God himself has already made note of it. You see from this scripture account, before any person came to Jesus and said, I am hungry; before any of them slipped away from the crowd and got a head start on the road, Jesus himself said, We are going to have a problem on our hands. This is going to be a predicament. These people do not have enough

food for themselves. To face a problem begin at this point: God himself is aware of my problem. God has an active concern.

Isn't that a tremendous concept? Little me, with the thing that vexes and irritates. God himself has already made note of it, and God knows all about it. That should be a lift to any man's soul. From this diary that some of us carry around in our hearts, do you remember the lift that some people experienced when they came to us thinking they were going to make confession, thinking that they were going to tell us something. Then they have to say, But you knew all about it all along, didn't you?

Beloved, I can tell you this: Your God and my God has made note of my problem and your problem. And because God knows, God cares. And because he is God, he is able to do something about it and he has a solution in mind. But do not commit the error that some people commit when they say to themselves, Why, if God knows and if God cares, and if God is God, and if God is powerful, then let God solve it. "Take care of it by yourself God."

It used to amuse me when I read certain passages in the Old Testament, how these old Jews would bring their problems to God, every now and then they would make it plain to God that he was in duty bound to solve the problem because they were his people and his honor and his integrity was at stake. Go ahead God, it is your responsibility to do something. I make bold to tell you this morning that God himself may not desire to solve a problem by himself alone. He may be able to do it, but that does not necessarily mean that he will. This God of all of us with human concern is always waiting for human participation -- and what is more, for human cooperation. God may know about my problem, but God man not solve my problem all by himself.

And that leads to the next step in the formula -- God's concern and God's knowledge of my problem -- The next step is: Man, with whatever available resources he may possess, must always be a part of the solution. To that end Jesus Christ said to the disciples, "How many loaves do you have?" Now. In your hand. Not, How many do you think you would like to have? Not, how many do you think you should

have? Not, how many do you wish you had? "What is the present inventory?"

To face a problem man must always take stock of the present resources. Would you like to do something daring? Exercise this discipline sometime of listing on a piece of paper for yourself what you consider the major problems of the world. Political -- economic -- social -- religious -- racial. If you have to reach for another piece of paper, go ahead. And now list what you think the major problems in your neighborhood. Want to use the same techniques? Economic -- Social -- Political -- Racial -- Religious. If you think you could be equal to the task, list the third set of problems -- personal problems now -- the things that concern you. And if in the listing of those problems you want to name people, keeping this thing to yourself, of course, go ahead --- name them: The person who becomes a problem to you because you don't like him; the person who becomes a problem to you because you know he doesn't like you. Name your sins; go ahead. Be brave about it (?). The things that vex you because you know they hurt other people, or if known, would hurt other people, and also because they hurt the very heart of God. Name your failures, your fears, your frustrations. Now after you have done this, look to God if you want to. I am going to presume something at this point -- I am going to presume that the face of God focused upon you, those eyes of his focused upon you, will speak these words as you see and hear his lips: "I know; I know all about them." And then something should happen to you -- it may dwell upon you at that point that you can never be divorced from your problem or problems, and that you and your problems together are accountable to God. You still want something to be done about it and you are still going to look to God as you name your problems. You know what God is going to do? He is going to look right back at you and he is going to say, How many loaves do you have? What do you have to offer? On how much cooperation can I count, as far as you are concerned? What will be the human endeavor? What will be the human participation, if you want this problem to be solved? You see, there is no escaping. Whatever the problem may be, God knows all about it, and God also knows that there is something that you can do to help solve

it. And not until you are willing to take the little you may have, what little it may be, and say, All right, God, You may take it; whatever you expect from me, you may take it --

And then you enter into the third area -- God -- Man -- God. And then God takes your loaf (?) and God will bless it. And you might have a miracle happen, for that is the way miracles occur.

God -- Man -- God.

I must tell you this, my friend. This problem that you may have, you may name it. You may know that it concerns God. Remember this: Don't ever think for a single minute that you can solve it by yourself. Don't ever think for a single minute that you can get along with only two steps in the formula. God's knowledge; God's concern and man's participation. There is no single problem that man can ever solve completely and personally by himself. God did not make us that well. Since the dawn of time man has been making a bad mess of himself and the responsibility is not God's, but Man's. But God has so made man that if man comes to him and says, "God, God Take over and use what I have", then God will.

Now this is the way the sermon is going to end. Go back to the problems that you have listed. Make up your mind that God knows about them. Make up your mind that the answer is going to come to you by God's help. If you have to take your time, take your time. Some of the problems that you may have to face may never be solved down here. You may have to take your time, and you may have to be satisfied with only throwing in a little but you have to begin with that little. If it is the problem of race, God says, How many loaves do you have? Isn't there at least one person of the other race -- just one person -- that you can and befriend in the name of Jesus Christ? Begin at that point.

If it is the problem of economics, the underprivileged, the social strata, isn't there at least one person whose lot may become better now through you?

That is what Jesus meant when He said, How many loaves do you have? Only seven? But give me the seven.

Beloved, I preach this sermon with the utmost of confidence at your coming (?), for in the year and a half that I have been your shepherd I have gathered enough evidence from view after view, from person after person, to believe that this is the way some problems have to be met. God knows; God cares. I take what I have and I ask God to bless it.

That is the reason why some of you have the light in your eyes that you have. You have met your problems this way.

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Sunday, August 18, 1957

Pastor Raymond Shaheen

The sermon, based on the Gospel lesson for the day, is entitled, "A Good Lesson From a Bad Man". The text is the 1st verse of the 16th Chapter of the Gospel according to Saint Luke. "There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods."

Go ahead, my friend, call him all those ^{ugly} commonplace (?) names you would like to call him. That is, scoundrel, unjust, wicked, untrustworthy -- any name that becomes a dishonest man. Go ahead, call him all these things and more. Yet, strange as it may seem, our Blessed Lord uses this problem, this story about a man who is not good, in order to teach -- to teach a good lesson to people who ought to be good. It is this parable, by the way, which has caused a number of people a great deal of anxiety and trouble. They can't quite ^{fully} understand why even our Blessed Lord would tell such a story where praise would be offered in behalf of a man who was wicked. But you must remember, this is not an allegory whereby you take each character therein and superimpose him upon the pages of the New Testament of the Christian Church. This is a parable and again and again our Lord used this method of teaching, and always in each parable there is what we might refer to as a central luminous truth; that is, this story is being told for one purpose, and then it is our responsibility to find out what the lesson is.

Once Jesus told some of his friends that he deliberately chose to speak in parables in order to make people think. Now, maybe it is this parable that makes us think a little bit more than we are usually wont to think concerning the writings of the New Testament. Let us look at the parable now and focus our eye upon what Jesus is talking about -- a bad man.

He had a position of responsibility, being a steward employed by a man who owned a lot of land -- one acre after another -- so much so that he was able to divide it up into many tenant farmer blocks, and because his acreage was so great he knew he could not handle it by himself and so he had the services of a steward, that is, an agent.

By the way, that word "steward" is a perfectly good word and you ought to know the meaning of the word. Originally it meant "the keeper of the king's store" (?) -- a man entrusted by somebody of responsibility with a particular obligation to perform even a menial task and do it faithfully and well. Well, this man who owned all of the land was quite a bit removed from the actual transactions that would take place, and quite frequently a person could be dishonest for a period of time until he would be discovered. Well, this steward was a dishonest man, and when his dishonesty finally came to light the lord of the estate naturally took him to task and said, Now you must give an account of your stewardship because you can no longer be my steward.

What would the man do? Recognizing the handwriting on the wall, knowing now that his days were numbered -- and incidentally, the lord of the estate seemed to be charitable enough to give the man a few extra days and did not summarily dismiss him -- so the steward takes advantage of these remaining days and he plays them to the whole (?) and he loads on the traffic all it can take, using to his own advantage any single opportunity. That is what he did: He called in one tenant farmer after another and he said, Now you know that you owe the lord of the estate so much money. You owe him so much by way of interest fees, or you owe him so much in kind. By the way, what do you owe him? And if a man said, One hundred measures of oil, he might say to him, I will tell you what I will do. I have watched you for sometime and I know you are a good . I think the lord of the estate had been exploiting you people. I am your friend. It is up to me to exact the price. I will tell you what you do. If the lord says, one hundred -- you make it eighty. And so he went, one man after another. If the book says one hundred -- we will make it fifty.

They were pleased and delighted -- they had found a new friend. This man was working in their behalf, albiet it, all the time, you see, he was feathering his own nest. Even this thing comes to light and the lord of the estate hears of this added dishonesty. But, lo and behold, what does the lord of the estate say? "Why, the

fellow is a clever chap. I have got to commend him. He has done wisely.

Now, that is the story that Jesus told. Then He says to those who hear him tell it: The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.

It is as clear as today (?). Here is a bad man -- But take a page from his book. There is something that you can learn from him.

And that is what we ought to do. What is the good lesson that a bad man teaches? First of all, I would suggest, my friend, that you bear in mind that here the man who is the chief actor in this parable realizes that he himself must do something to solve the problem. That is to be said to his credit. You know how he might have reacted: My mother's She never did know how to bring me up. That is why I am in this situation as I am now. He might have said to ~~it was my father's fault~~ himself, My father/^{never}should this to me . No wonder I didn't know how to observe the fair rules of the game. He might have blamed society; he might have blamed a society in which he was taught. He might have blamed so many people and so many things, but he he didn't. Without decrying against anybody else, this is the reaction of the unjust steward: What shall I do? As much as to say, I got myself into this mess; I will get myself out of it. Clever, astute, willing and daring to act at once. This is to be said in favor of the man. The man is not being praised because he was bad or because of is evil, but the man is to be praised because being evil and being bad, he was clever, he was astute, he was farsighted.

Take a page from his book. I repeat it. We, who are the children of light, again and again when we find ourselves with some unfortunate dilemma confronting us, let us learn from this man. The first move should be made by us. Something should be done, and something should be done at once. I do not hesitate to tell you I get weary when I go to Church conventions, when I sit down even with committee meetings within the parish, sometimes. We will size up the situation; he will call the problem by name; we will go all the way around it -- diagnose, analyze it, and sometimes -- all too often -- that is the end of it. We may pass resolutions, declaiming society and the force of the play --

But take a page from a bad man confronted by an unpleasant situation. He said, I must act. I must do something.

And I am wondering sometimes if the besetting sin of Christians isn't the besetting sin of inactivity, responsibility -- now. What shall I do?

The first thing you recognize in this bad man: I must do something and I must do something now.

Another thing to be said in his praise, even as the parable illustrates it, all that he did, he did as over against tomorrow. Far-sighted creature that he was, he made today count because he knew that there would be a tomorrow. And he would shape and fashion today in an image that might be helpful to him when tomorrow would come.

You and I are children of light. We are God's children. We know God loves us. We know God cares for us. We know that in God's hand there is tomorrow for each of us. But can it be said that each day that we live, we fashion the day according to the shadow that is cast by eternity's light? Take a page from his book. He used every opportunity he had today as over against tomorrow.

Let me allow you a glimpse of my heart this morning -- from one of the heart throbs that I knew (?). This past week I was called back to Pennsylvania to participate in the funeral services of a very good friend -- a gentleman, I suppose, of who it could be said that in his day he did more good, perhaps, than any other single man in the community. He had so many opportunities and he used them. I was delighted to learn that this was his last gesture as he breathed his last. He folded his hands prayerfully and his lips breathed a prayer. The forward look of faith. God and tomorrow, the eternal door of Heaven.

But I have another picture that I can put over against that, for I was privileged to be numbered among some of his confidantes and some of us knew this about the man: For perhaps the last decade or so, would you believe me when I tell you that he made it his business never to allow a single day to pass without being able to name one specific person at least who had been benefited from some gracious gesture on his part?

He didn't allow his goodness just to happen by chance and to fall where it might. But he always wanted to know the joy and the satisfaction of being able to name in his prayer at least one person for whom he had tried to do some specific good. That is how he lived each day, in the shadow of eternity's lovely light.

We who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we who are given the assurance that heaven belongs to us, take a page from the book of the Bad Man -- Can it be said of you and of me that day by day, with time still being of the essence, are we using any opportunity, every opportunity for good as over against tomorrow's warning of Jesus Christ. The bad man was astute; the bad man accepted a kind of responsibility to do something and the bad man was far-sighted. He stacked the present hours over against tomorrow. It could also be said that he was diligent in his endeavor, making every single opportunity count for good even though it be in his own behalf.

When I was a student at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Gettysburg, I remember hearing a guest lecturer who had returned from India. Dr. was telling us about how he wanted to visit in New York an old schoolmate of his who had become a master of the ballet, who had given his life to the dance. When Dr. want to the studio he had to wait for one single hour and a half until he could be received because the master and the pupil were seeking to perfect one single step in the dance.

Beloved, the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. Day after day to perfect one step in the dance. We who are children of God numbered among the people in your acquaintance, in your own life, perchance, who spend one single hour and a half every day to perfect a spiritual walk in the light of God's love and truth? The children of this generation are wiser, the children of the world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.

I am not facetious, I am not sarcastic, when I ask you to think about the person, male or female, who spends one hour perhaps, and more, each day just

being perfectly sure that one's grooming is well done, that one is dressed properly, that one looks ^{half} ~~as~~ decent to walk among the children of men. And so little heed do we pay to cleansing the soul and making sure that we are well garbed in the robes of righteousness.

the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. Even in the world of military preparation, to save this world of which we are a part, these worlds of brick and mortar, these civilized people that make up the scene. \$ million dollars for one nuclear powered ? to save a world of brick and mortar. (?) For the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.

Cast over against that the feeble endeavors of the Christian church. You ought never again to have trouble, my friend, in understanding this parable. The lesson should be plain -- all to plain. Here was a bad ~~man~~. In order to save his skin, was and astute and far-sighted. How about you? And your endeavors to save your soul?

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Sunday, September 1, 1957

Pastor Raymond Shaheen

The sermon is entitled, "Thoughts on a Labor Day Sunday . The text is the 10th Verse of the 3rd Chapter of Paul's Second Letter to the Thessalonians: For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any man would not work, neither should he eat.

That is putting it about as bluntly as any man could put it. Certainly in this case no one could misunderstand what the Apostle Paul had in mind. He had lived with these people; he had observed their habits; even when he was with them he made it his responsibility to walk among them with integrity, always paying his own freight (?). If he preached in the afternoon or taught in the early hours of the evening, his hands in the morning were always busy mending and repairing tents. Somewhere, someone had gotten the notion that perhaps if a man became a member of the Christian church and placed his responsibility in the hands of God, that God would take care of everything. But this preacher had a way of bringing back people quickly to earth. This I told you before: If any man wants to eat, he must work. And if he doesn't work, he can't eat.

But long before the Apostle Paul wrote this to the Christians in Thessalonica, the world itself had come to know that the lesson could not be ignored. It is as old as civilization for from the dawning of time men had to learn this lesson for themselves if it was not taught in any other way. You may traverse this world, no matter in what point, what section, the fact will always remain. If a man wants to eat, he will have to work. That was true when the African wanted to build his hut, his shelter. Didn't he have to go after the twigs? Didn't he have to gather the leaves, the branches, make for himself clay? Even the caveman, didn't he have to go in search of his prey if he wanted food for himself? Oh, there is the legendary picture of the South Sea Islander where a man reclines so comfortably underneath the tree and the cocoanuts simply fall into his lap. But there are those who tell us it is more legendary than fact; that even in the South Sea Islands one could not live without effort. The world

over the principle remains, If a man may eat, he must work. If he does not work, he shall not eat.

It has been said that the Christian Church has not spoken as loudly or as clearly as she should to men who must work; ~~that~~ so seldom has she spoken to them in their condition on a Monday morning. Ah, when Sunday comes she has them captive from the world, so to speak, in a quiet spot where even doors painted red can shut you out from the outside world, and here in one sublime hour we can talk about heaven and things to come. And even your neighbor and the preacher himself may find you at your best, and you may interpret that in more ways than one, if you wish. The Church can easily deal with people on Sunday morning, but what about a world so important enough to be spoken to to hold them in good stead when Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday -- and the Church must recognize that our people go back all too many, all too frequently, to a same, monotonous routine. What has the Church to say to the man who must go back on Monday morning to the foreman whom he has never learned to like? To the man who may work alongside of him, whom he may dislike intensely? What about the man who must go back to his position, to his shop, on a Monday morning with the ever-recurring temptation to cheat? To lie? Always the opportunity to deceive? Has the Church ever spoken clearly enough and loudly enough to the man that he cannot help but feel its voice come Monday morning? This charge has been laid against the Christian church time and time again.

As your Pastor and the shepherd and bishop of your souls concern for you not only on a Sunday, but on a Monday as well, and on Tuesday at that. Listen to me, I would say to you this morning that the Church does have something to say, and God have mercy on the Pastor's soul who when he sees his people, he beholds them only as a congregation come together only on a Sunday morning, who is not aware of the fact that come Monday they travel diverse and various paths to their posts of duty. God have mercy upon that Pastor who is unmindful of them when Monday morning comes.

So, when I see you now, when I greet you on this day before Labor Day, is there any good word that I can proclaim to you in the name of God? Is there anything that the Church has to offer you by which a philosophy can be fashioned that will help you when you go back to your day's work? For the fact remains, if a man would eat, he must work. In this world in which we are a part, no man can go on living without eating. How can a man eat unless somewhere someone is constantly expending effort.

Fashion a Christian philosophy for the man who works? Listen to Point One: The Christian should say to himself when he goes to his day's work, no matter where it may be, the Christian ought to be able to say: I am going to work in God's field. God be praised and God be thanked for the farmer who looked up from his fields into the very face of Heaven and said, It is a marvelous thing to be able to work in God's field. Ah, the deed was in his name, and his father before him had owned the ground. The man said, It is a wonderful thing to be able to be at work in God's field. The Christian when he goes to work should remind himself that he is at work in God's world.

He ought also to lay hold upon the fact that God, at the very beginning, was at work. The master workman of the world is God. At the very beginning when you come to deal with the story of God, you come to deal with a God who is at work, creating the world, making the world. And the Christian says to himself, God who made the world, God who himself is the Great Worker, the Eternal Task-Master says to me, The world can be yours. But you must never forget that it is also mine. That is the point at which the Christian begins when he fashions his philosophy of labor. The world is God's field. Don't you suppose that would help him when he goes to his day's work in the face of so many temptations and frustrations if he could only keep saying to himself, My God is the great taskmaster and the field in which I give my endeavor is God's.

You read between the lines, of course you do, every time you pick up your paper and concern yourself with the scandal so recently come to light from labor

itself. Why could those bosses have done so corruptly as they have done if it were not for the fact that they must have reminded themselves, This is man's world. I will make as much as I can, as quickly as I can, from as many people as I can, even though it may be as dishonest as it may have to be. When a man goes to his day's work and reminds himself, This is God's, how can he fail but conduct himself with honesty and integrity? For the world belongs to God and the field is his. So the Christian when he goes to work should always begin at that point: This is God's.

The second thing that a Christian should say to himself when he goes to work, Whatever I do I can make as an offering to God, if this is God's world. Ah, you have heard that echoed from many a Lutheran pulpit. It is simply the re-echoing of the voice of Martin Luther himself who said -- don't you remember it so well -- the shoe repairman, the cobbler he takes this pair of shoes to repair them. When with honesty and integrity he does his job decently and well, oh, I tell you, he performs this deed as sacred as the priest who stands with folded hands prayerfully before the altar.

The Christian should say to himself when he goes to his day's work, What I am about to do I shall do to the glory of God. All work, in a certain sense, for the Christian can become sacramental. What a tremendous change could take place in certain people that you may know, in certain people that I know, if when they go back day after day to their work they could say to themselves, I shall take this day as an opportunity by which to render service that shall glorify Almighty God. I do not have to tell you what naturally follows, do I? If a Christian ever finds himself doing work that he cannot offer to the glory of God, then it becomes the Christian's to hire himself off to some other boss that he may find himself in a position where whatever he does is but to the glory of God.

God gives light. God bestows upon you talent. God allows you certain capabilities and the Christian never has (?) done with the notion that he is held ac-

countable to God -- Everyday, every talent, any talent. God says, It is yours, but if you glorify me with it, that is the better way by which to use it.

The third thing that a Christian should keep in mind when he fashions his philosophy for labor is simply this: Whatever a Christian does in his day's work as it glorifies God should also benefit mankind.

The best labor is always that which serves to satisfy the human being, and the Christian is not blind to the truth that if this is God's world, then the people who are in it are God's children. And God's children should be helped, they should benefit from the talent and the skill of one another. No man is ignorant (?) of the truth that he is indebted to so many other people.

If you want a healthy exercise sometime, start listing the number of people in a single hour to whom you are dependent. Because that is the shape and the fashion of things whenever you and I expend any energy or give a day's work we ought to know the joy of realizing that someone is benefiting from it. I will grant you, there are certain posts and certain positions where it is extremely difficult to believe what I am saying.

, distinguished British , tells in one of his
 books about a woman he knew who spent her day making artificial for
 artificial . Now how in heaven's name can anyone find satis-
 faction and inspiration out of doing something like that day after day and wondering
 how mankind could benefit. But if you smile to yourself at that sort of thing, it
 is simply a type perhaps of a large number of people who have to go to their day's
 work, wondering -- wondering -- wondering -- What is the good of it anyway? What
 is the meaning of the thing I am doing? Maybe we should take the economic order to
 task for making so many people (?) in this generation nothing but machine-minded,
 striking so frequently the death knoll to all grateful hearts.

But I am not speaking to the world at large and I am not addressing my words to the captains of industry and those who fashioned the of economics. I am very much aware of the fact that I am addressing a congregation of believers in

the Lord Jesus Christ, and I say to you this morning that you are blessed indeed, and certainly most important if when you go to your day's work, no matter what it may be, remembering first of all that you are to work in God's field, to whom you must always be held accountable, and that what you are about to do in your day's work can be done to the glory of God and that from your efforts mankind shall know better, (?) you shall satisfy human beings (?). That is why in recent years the Christian Church has been talking a great deal about Christian vocation. That is why in recent years the Christian church has been talking much about full life Christian service. We haven't stressed too much preachers, missionaries, but it has been a glad day for the Christian church when she has tried to impress upon every person that every single life accountable to God should be cast in that light.

My friend, some day when we come to the end of the , we will be confronted by the keeper of the , the watcher of the fields, the timer of destiny. He who is the searcher of the hearts and the minds of men will look at each of us and he will say to us, Show me your hands as well. While you were there, what did you do? And while he looks us straight in the eye then, he will pause for a moment and he will scan the whole universe looking for people who have benefited from your life and from mine.

Judgment can be as awesome as all that and a single day's work can be so important.

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SERMON ENTITLED "AFTER HEARING...SPEAKING"
DELIVERED ON THE TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER
TRINITY, SEPTEMBER 8, 1957

For want of a better title, the sermon bears this inscription "After Hearing ...Speaking". The text is from the Gospel for the day, the 35th verse of the 7th chapter of the Gospel according to Mark "And straightway his ears were opened and the string of his tongue was loosed and he spake plainly". If you thought any ordinary miracle attracted a crowd, this one even moreso, for it is one thing to make a blind man to see, it is one thing to make a lame man to walk, but when a man is wrought with a double affliction, not being able to hear, not being able to speak, then you have something a bit extraordinary, to say the least, and like as not the disciple band was all agog. This is a miracle among miracles and they were eager to see how he would perform. Lo and behold, he took the subject away from the throng but the multitude was just as eager as when he had the mute by himself. He made the miracle come to pass, But I ask you, my friend, what would have been your priority if you were working this miracle... a man who cannot hear, a man who cannot speak ... which faculty would you have restored first? Quickly and easily you say "I would have followed the same strategy as the Master". I would restore hearing, then the gift of speech would follow almost automatically" ... and that is exactly what the Master did. For if a man is to communicate with other people, he may first become dependent upon the communication that he has with them. If I am to speak, then it may be better that I should first hear somebody speak to me. For how can I proclaim if I have not first received? How may I be able to speak if I have not first heard? Every miracle can also be understood to a degree as a parable. And because that is true, all that I would share with you now I share with you in that way. For as we see the performance of this miracle, we catch something of the reflection of ourselves, for it could be said of us, we too are the deaf, we too oftentimes are the speechless ones. This is a picture of every man, as the man who is mute, the deaf and the dumb one is brought to Jesus Christ. I love Him for having done it. It isn't exactly sheer wit, it is wisdom personified.

One time when Albert Einstein was in the presence of an unusually brilliant group of men and they were discussing a very important subject, somebody invited Albert Einstein to speak. Much to their embarrassment, much to their surprise, he stood up and said "You have invited me to speak. I really haven't anything to say", and he sat down. He did make it known before the meeting was over that if they would be gracious enough to invite him back sometime when he had time to think about this matter, then he might have something to say. Wise indeed is that person who realizes that before he should speak, he should prepare himself. He should put his ears in tune with the thing that is at hand.

This parable, this miracle comes very close to the hearts of each one of us. For it can be said that we are the speechless ones in this generation; that the world is waiting to hear some good thing which comes of the very echo of the voice of God and time and time again the Christian is not articulate. The Christian, who is the logical one to echo the very voice of God, all too frequently says nothing, whether he speaks or not.

There is an interesting bit of history that you can get from any history of England, that deals with the community of Norwich; back in the middle of the seventeenth century, in 1650 in fact, the people of Norwich presented a petition to the English Parliament and this was the petition. "We would want the authority to tear down the Norwich Cathedral in order to build up the piers and to erect a workhouse." In the minds of many people, that is a symbol of a church no longer serving a useful, practical purpose.... just so much ornament upon the structure of society. Somewhere, somehow, the Cathedral of Norwich had failed to speak to the condition of men and women and naturally they responded as they did. Could that be a commentary upon us today? Is the world crying out to hear some good word and the church, being all too often speechless, with nothing to say of the conditions and circumstances of mankind? This miracle, I say to you again and again, is a parable. We are mute, we are speechless because we could, we may be deaf to the agonizing cry of our fellowmen and deaf to the very whisper of the eternal voice of God.

Why did the Orthodox Church in Russia lose her influence? For the simple reason for more than a hundred years she had no traffic whatsoever with the common man, she had nothing to speak to the persecuted and the oppressed because she was deaf to their agonizing cry, because she was deaf to the challenging voice of Jesus Christ who beholds with pity all who are oppressed. She had nothing to say. Before Jesus Christ allowed us men to have the faculty of speech, he first opened his ears. Maybe that is where you and I ought to begin in our Christian experience. Lord, speak to me that I may speak. Lord, allow me to hear the whisper of Thy voice, that when I have something to say it shall be in Thy name.

Christians were meant to be articulate, Christians were never meant to be the silent type. When our Lord Jesus Christ turned His back upon this fair earth, He allowed everything to be entrusted to a handful of disciples ... and what did He call them, what did He say to them? Ye shall be my witnesses, and a witness is one who testifies, who speaks in behalf of. They remembered that whenever they had fellowship with Jesus Christ, whenever He stood up to speak, it was as though it were the very voice of God. They remembered that whenever He touched a soul in need, it was as though the very Hand of God was put there gently, yet not pressing too strongly, and the miracle of love came to pass. They put their fingers to their lips and they referred to Him as Very God of Very God, begotten, not made. And then in moments of deep reflection they could easily recall how He had spent hour after hour in meditation. After the baptism of the Holy Spirit and before, there were those hours of meditation. Before any single disciple was chosen, he waited to first hear the voice of God. Before he would preach any sermon, there was always the period when he was upon his knees; before He travelled the Via Donna Rosa, the agonizing moments upon His knees in the Garden of Gethsemane, always waiting, waiting, waiting to hear the still small voice of God. No wonder when He spoke it was as if the very voice of God was being heard. Before He spoke, He first listened.

It is a fundamental fact of religious experience, gained even from the pages of the Old Testament "Be still and know that I am God".

I underline again and again for you, this miracle is as a parable, the priority in the performance of the miracle is sound and wise. First the ears were opened and then the string of the tongue was loosed and he began to speak plainly. We could be the deaf and because we are the deaf we could be the speechless ones. How sensitive is your ear to the agonizing cry of the oppressed and the persecuted in this day? Without hesitation, I tell you, a soul in this parish, for whom I have unusually high regard, handed me a book on the plight of freedom in Hungary. And as I read page after page and looked at photograph after photograph, my hand almost trembled as I put the book aside. And I thank God for it, for where is the soul that should ever allow himself to become insensitive to the agonizing cry of a people to be free? And if I should react that way to a people who want political freedom, how great should be the reaction of my soul to a people who want freedom from their sins, who know anguish in the dark light of their corner. And I ask you, can you hear the agonizing cry of men and women, are your ears unstopped that you may be able to discern the pleading of these people for attention and help? Only as you hear will you be able to help. Let me give you something now as human as life itself.

A playmate of one of our boys came to spend the night under our roof.... a night away from home, in a strange bed...and I thought I heard the sobbing of a child's voice. No one calling loudly for attention, no one calling that somebody should come and answer his plea, but simply the sobbing of a child in the darkness; and because I heard his sobbing, I went to his room and was able to comfort and dispel the fear of the darkness, and the child who never asked for that kind of attention went off peacefully to sleep. The ministry of assurance would never have been given if I had not heard ... even the sobbing of a child who did not ask.

We could be deaf, my friends, to the crying of humanity in one troubled spot in the world after another. We may put away the evening or morning paper as casually as we push the napkin away from our laps. We could be the deaf who do not hear and because we do not hear, we have nothing to say to them, no way to help.

One of the most interesting diaries to come out of the last world war is the diary of a French priest. He could have gone on routinely saying mass in one of those interesting parishes in a suburb of Paris, he could have led a kind of cloistered life but he had taken note of the fact that more than one peasant had been taken and sent off to Germany as conscripted labor. Nobody said anything to him about it but his ear was sensitive to their agonizing cry for something that would hold them in good stead in their misery. The priest turned his back on his comfortable parish, disguised himself as a fellow-worker and went off to work as one conscripted with them. Suddenly he was able to interest some of the other priests and they served in a similar manner and he said to them "These people with whom we associate are hungry for God... so live that your ear will be sensitive to their pleading and even some day, when one of them should ask you for a match...if when you give him the match you will stand still long enough to engage him in conversation, you will most certainly discover in even ten minutes that they will ask for something about God". And the priest said to his fellow-workers "We who love Jesus Christ...if in that moment they cannot catch something of the spirit of God through us, then who shall answer their pleas?"

In the brief period that God has given to me as Minister of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, I am constrained to believe, stand still for ten minutes with any person, under any condition or circumstance in life and you too will eventually discover, if you are sensitive enough, that there is a hunger for something to be spoken to them that comes from God. And I say to you with all the challenge that my soul will command, if we Christians cannot be articulate in the name of God, who then will? The miracle is of the parable; it could be that we are speechless because we are deaf.

In George Bernard Shaw's interpretation of Joan of Arc, he has the maid before him accosted by the Dauphin, who disclaims or exclaims in this manner: these voices, these voices, you are always talking about the voices that you hear. Why don't these voices come to me? Why don't I hear them? I am the King. And Joan simply replies as earnestly as she can "But these voices do come to you but you do not listen. At the sound of the Angelus, you make the sign of the cross and that is all. You do not tarry

to think, to meditate. But when I have been in the field, I have waited long after the Angelus has been sounded and I can still hear their ringing. And I wait for the very voice of God. The voices they come but you must wait... you must listen."

God has so made each of us that by his finger our ears can be unstopped. Wonderful and all true ... we have been made to hear God speak to us and ours is a God who speaks but to hear Him we must still the soul...we must listen. I should be very happy indeed, my friend, if you would consider this hour that you spend in this place as a kind of listening-post, as a kind of watchtower where the voice of God could come to you. And I would charge any man, even as I charge myself, never to stand at this sacred desk even for twenty minutes without being able to say, figuratively speaking, at least, that I had spent hours upon my knees, that before I could speak I should have at first heard.

The Kitchen sink, your dining room table, your desk, as you share the car pool on your way to work, as you are seated at your desk, as you stand at the counter. These can all become media for proclaiming some echo of the Eternal Voice. But you cannot give what you have not first heard. You cannot speak save as you have listened. The miracle is the barrier. Before the man could speak, he first was made to hear.

The benediction

The Rev. Raymond Shaheen

SERMON ENTITLED "AFTER HEARING...SPEAKING"
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For want of a better title, the sermon bears this inscription "After Hearing ...Speaking". The text is from the Gospel for the day, the 35th verse of the 7th chapter of the Gospel according to Mark "And straightway his ears were opened and the string of his tongue was loosed and he spake plainly". If you thought any ordinary miracle attracted a crowd, this one even moreso, for it is one thing to make a blind man to see, it is one thing to make a lame man to walk, but when a man is wrought with a double affliction, not being able to hear, not being able to speak, then you have something a bit extraordinary, to say the least, and like as not the disciple band was all agog. This is a miracle among miracles and they were eager to see how he would perform. Lo and behold, he took the subject away from the throng but the multitude was just as eager as when he had the mute by himself. He made the miracle come to pass, But I ask you, my friend, what would have been your priority if you were working this miracle... a man who cannot hear, a man who cannot speak ... which faculty would you have restored first. Quickly and easily you say "I would have followed the same strategy as the Master". I would restore hearing, then the gift of speech would follow almost automatically" ... and that is exactly what the Master did. For if a man is to communicate with other people, he may first become dependent upon the communication that he has with them. If I am to speak, then it may be better that I should first hear somebody speak to me. For how can I proclaim if I have not first received. How may I be able to speak if I have not first heard? Every miracle can also be understood to a degree as a parable. And because that is true, all that I would share with you now I share with you in that way. For as we see the performance of this miracle, we catch something of the reflection of ourselves, for it could be said of us, we too are the deaf, we too oftentimes are the speechless ones. This is a picture of every man, as the man who is mute, the deaf and the dumb one is brought to Jesus Christ. I love Him for having done it. It isn't exactly sheer wit, it is wisdom personified.

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This parable, this miracle comes very close to the hearts of each one of us. For it can be said that we are the speechless ones in this generation; that the world is waiting to hear some good thing which comes of the very echo of the voice of God and time and time again the Christian is not articulate. The Christian, who is the logical one to echo the very voice of God, all too frequently says nothing, whether he speaks or not.

There is an interesting bit of history that you can get from any history of England, that deals with the community of Norwich; back in the middle of the seventeenth century, in 1650 in fact, the people of Norwich presented a petition to the English Parliament and this was the petition. "We would want the authority to tear down the Norwich Cathedral in order to build up the piers and to erect a workhouse." In the minds of many people, that is a symbol of a church no longer serving a useful, practical purpose.... just so much ornament upon the structure of society. Somewhere, somehow, the Cathedral of Norwich had failed to speak to the condition of men and women and naturally they responded as they did. Could that be a commentary upon us today? Is the world crying out to hear some good word and the church, being all too often speechless, with nothing to say of the conditions and circumstances of mankind? This miracle, I say to you again and again, is a parable. We are mute, we are speechless because we could, we may be deaf to the agonizing cry of our fellowmen and deaf to the very whisper of the eternal voice of God.

Why did the Orthodox Church in Russia lose her influence? For the simple reason for more than a hundred years she had no traffic whatsoever with the common man, she had nothing to speak to the persecuted and the oppressed because she was deaf to their agonizing cry, because she was deaf to the challenging voice of Jesus Christ who beholds with pity all who are oppressed. She had nothing to say. Before Jesus Christ allowed us men to have the faculty of speech, he first opened his ears. Maybe that is where you and I ought to begin in our Christian experience. Lord, speak to me that I may speak. Lord, allow me to hear the whisper of Thy voice, that when I have something to say it shall be in Thy name.

Christians were meant to be articulate, Christians were never meant to be the silent type. When our Lord Jesus Christ turned His back upon this fair earth, He allowed everything to be entrusted to a handful of disciples ... and what did He call them, what did He say to them? Ye shall be my witnesses, and a witness is one who testifies, who speaks in behalf of. They remembered that whenever they had fellowship with Jesus Christ, whenever He stood up to speak, it was as though it were the very voice of God. They remembered that whenever He touched a soul in need, it was as though the very Hand of God was put there gently, yet not pressing too strongly, and the miracle of love came to pass. They put their fingers to their lips and they referred to Him as Very God of Very God, begotten, not made. And then in moments of deep reflection they could easily recall how He had spent hour after hour in meditation. After the baptism of the Holy Spirit and before, there were those hours of meditation. Before any single disciple was chosen, he waited to first hear the voice of God. Before he would preach any sermon, there was always the period when he was upon his knees; before He travelled the Via Donna Rosa, the agonizing moments upon His knees in the Garden of Gethsemane, always waiting, waiting, waiting to hear the still small voice of God. No wonder when He spoke it was as if the very voice of God was being heard. Before He spoke, He first listened.

It is a fundamental fact of religious experience, gained even from the pages of the Old Testament "Be still and know that I am God".

I underline again and again for you, this miracle is as a parable, the priority in the performance of the miracle is sound and wise. First the ears were opened and then the string of the tongue was loosed and he began to speak plainly. We could be the deaf and because we are the deaf we could be the speechless ones. How sensitive is your ear to the agonizing cry of the oppressed and the persecuted in this day? Without hesitation, I tell you a soul in this parish, for whom I have unusually high regard, handed me a book on the plight of freedom in Hungary. And as I read page after page and looked at photograph after photograph, my hand almost trembled as I put the book aside. And I thank God for it, for where is the soul that should ever allow himself to become insensitive to the agonizing cry of a people to be free? And if I should react that way to a people who want political freedom, how great should be the reaction of my soul to a people who want freedom from their sins, who know anguish in the dark light of their corner. And I ask you, can you hear the agonizing cry of men and women, are your ears unstopped that you may be able to discern the pleading of these people for attention and help? Only as you hear will you be able to help. Let me give you something now as human as life itself.

A playmate of one of our boys came to spend the night under our roof.... a night away from home, in a strange bed...and I thought I heard the sobbing of a child's voice. No one calling loudly for attention, no one calling that somebody should come and answer his plea, but simply the sobbing of a child in the darkness; and because I heard his sobbing, I went to his room and was able to comfort and dispel the fear of the darkness, and the child who never asked for that kind of attention went off peacefully to sleep. The ministry of assurance would never have been given if I had not heard ... even the sobbing of a child who did not ask.

We could be deaf, my friends, to the crying of humanity in one troubled spot in the world after another. We may put away the evening or morning paper as casually as we push the napkin away from our laps. We could be the deaf who do not hear and because we do not hear, we have nothing to say to them, no way to help.

One of the most interesting diaries to come out of the last world war is the diary of a French priest. He could have gone on routinely saying mass in one of those interesting parishes in a suburb of Paris, he could have led a kind of cloistered life but he had taken note of the fact that more than one peasant had been taken and sent off to Germany as conscripted labor. Nobody said anything to him about it but his ear was sensitive to their agonizing cry for something that would hold them in good stead in their misery. The priest turned his back on his comfortable parish, disguised himself as a fellow-worker and went off to work as one conscripted with them. Suddenly he was able to interest some of the other priests and they served in a similar manner and he said to them "These people with whom we associate are hungry for God... so live that your ear will be sensitive to their pleading and even some day, when one of them should ask you for a match...if when you give him the match you will stand still long enough to engage him in conversation, you will most certainly discover in even ten minutes that they will ask for something about God". And the priest said to his fellow-workers "We who love Jesus Christ...if in that moment they cannot catch something of the spirit of God through us, then who shall answer their pleas?

In the brief period that God has given to me as Minister of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, I am constrained to believe, stand still for ten minutes with any person, under any condition or circumstance in life and you too will eventually discover, if you are sensitive enough, that there is a hunger for something to be spoken to them that comes from God. And I say to you with all the challenge that my soul will command, if we Christians cannot be articulate in the name of God, who then will? The miracle is of the parable; it could be that we are speechless because we are deaf.

In George Bernard Shaw's interpretation of Joan of Arc, he has the maid before him accosted by the Dauphin, who disclaims or exclaims in this manner: these voices, these voices, you are always talking about the voices that you hear. Why don't these voices come to me? Why don't I hear them? I am the King. And Joan simply replies as earnestly as she can "But these voices do come to you but you do not listen. At the sound of the Angelus, you make the sign of the cross and that is all. You do not tarry

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God has so made each of us that by his finger our ears can be unstopped. Wonderful and all true ... we have been made to hear God speak to us and ours is a God who speaks but to hear Him we must still the soul...we must listen. I should be very happy indeed, my friend, if you would consider this hour that you spend in this place as a kind of listening-post, as a kind of watchtower where the voice of God could come to you. And I would charge any man, even as I charge myself, never to stand at this sacred desk even for twenty minutes without being able to say, figuratively speaking, at least, that I had spent hours upon my knees, that before I could speak I should have at first heard.

The Kitchen sink, your dining room table, your desk, as you share the car pool on your way to work, as you are seated at your desk, as you stand at the counter. These can all become media for proclaiming some echo of the Eternal Voice. But you cannot give what you have not first heard. You cannot speak save as you have listened. The miracle is the barrier. Before the man could speak, he first was made to hear.

The benediction

The Rev. Raymond Shaheen

SERMON ENTITLED "AFTER HEARING...SPEAKING"
DELIVERED ON THE TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER
TRINITY, SEPTEMBER 8, 1957

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The benediction

The Rev. Raymond Shaheen

Sunday, September 15, 1957

Pastor Raymond Shaheen

The sermon is entitled, "The Extravagance of Love." The text is from the Gospel for the day, the 35th Verse of the 10th Chapter according to Luke: And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence and give them to the host and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again I will repay you.

There is one word that keeps bobbing back from the horizon that I have thought (?) of when I recall this parable of the Good Samaritan. There is one word that can be aptly given to every character that is a part of the unfolding drama of the Jerusalem-Jericho road. That word? Surprise.

Let us begin. First of all, we are surprised that any man would ever make the journey from Jerusalem to Jericho by himself. That distance of from twenty to thirty miles has been known for generation after generation as the "Bloody Way." The robbers wait on either side of the road to take as victim anyone upon whom they may be able to fall. I recall that road from Jerusalem to Jericho. I remember how impressed I was with the steep descent -- Jericho, some thirteen hundred feet below sea level; Jerusalem, some twenty-three hundred feet above sea level. And if you wanted to do it, you could begin descent in your automobile in Jerusalem never turning on the motor at all. And once you were started, you could coast all the way down to Jerusalem. You would slow up, of course, as you came to the treacherous curves, only to pick up momentum for the next.

For generation after generation robbers were known to wait to take any man a victim. It was an established rule of the road that no one ever traveled Jerusalem to Jericho alone. So, of course, we meet this victim. We are surprised that he ever made the journey by himself.

As we read again the parable of the Good Samaritan we are equally surprised that there should be people traveling that road who, seeing another man in need, would ^{pass} pay him by with indifference. In this world so filled with misery and hardship most of us have come to recognize the fact that sooner or later we could be

the needy one. And if only to guarantee in our own mind an investment in humanity, we ourselves befriend someone as we say to ourselves, "Well, who knows; it is only a stroke of good fortune that it didn't happen to me." And so for the most part, we go our ways in life trying to help the fellow in need. And so we are surprised that there should be people traveling that way who would be impervious to that man's condition who had become victimized.

We are equally surprised -- even more so -- to discover that the priest and Levite who passed him by are people who of all people should never have done that. They were the religious people, mark you, and ,being good and being kind was a definite part of their religion. More than that, the priest who was taught to observe , who had been taught, even in his early years of training, of all the people in the world to pass by a man in need, surely you would think that somebody from the church would follow that pattern.

Surprise -- Surprise -- Surprise. It is the one word we have in common for each character who appears in this unfolding drama of the Jerusalem-Jericho road.

Now talking about surprises, do we hear correctly? Does the Master say it was a Samaritan who befriends the man who had been victimized? Of all people, not a Samaritan! And so we continue to be surprised. We would expect the Jew. But not a Samaritan. A Samaritan? The ridiculed? The persecuted? Is this the man who practices benevolence? That is as Jesus tells the story. So we are surprised that it should be the Samaritan.

And as we continue to read the story until it comes to its ending there is always a degree of surprise, and of all the surprises, none is more surprising than this: That once the Samaritan had brought the man to the village after he had

, after he had done so much to help, he says to the innkeeper, "Now you go on, and if there is any additional expense, whatever more you need, I will give it to you." This continuing benevolence. This extravagance of love. It was a surprising thing, to say the least. "Whatsoever more, I will give you." This, my friend, is the extravagance, which is Christian love. And ~~you~~^{to} better appreciate it,

all you have to do is to go back and recall how the Samaritan could have stopped with decency and honor, terminating his magnanimity at any one of the number of earlier points. Wasn't it a decent thing and an honorable thing that he should even take note of the man in his distress? The priest and the Levite didn't do that. It was something that he should even discover the victim, and he could have stopped and it would have been an honorable thing by going to the man and standing by his side and waiting, perhaps, until someone some other contingent of travelers came and allowed them to be the first aid scouts. And that, too, on his part would have been a gracious deed. Call him "Decent"; call him "Honorable".

This man who the act of compassion and more so is the man who might have stopped at any one of the earlier moments. (?) He could have gone to the man and given him oil ; he could have gone about binding up his wounds and said, That is about all I can do for you now. The victim would have said, Thank you, my friend, What you have already done has restored my faith in human nature. Thank you so much. He could have stopped at that point leaving the man at the mercy of some future traveler. And even for that much, the victim would have been thankful.

Or, of course, having got him on his way, he could have said to the people in Jericho, Look what I have done. I bursted (?) my sack, I have wearied my beast, I myself, I have been delayed in my trip, but at least I have rid the Jerusalem-Jericho road of a victim, who, if he had been allowed to stay there, would have been used as a decoy by the robbers by which to way-lay some other future crew of travelers. And look what else I have done. I have given him first aid.

would you mind taking over? Surely there is some kind of emergency squad here who can be equal to the situation. I would like to be on my way. In that way, too, he could have done enough.

But, beloved, this is the extravagance of Christian love. The man says, Take care of him. Give him bed and board. See that he gets necessary treatment. I will pay you now, and whatsoever more, when I come again, I will repay you.

This, I repeat, is the extravagance of Christian love. I am not unmindful -- certainly not -- that I am standing in the Christian pulpit. I am not unmindful that which declares the grace of Jesus Christ. The extravagance of God's love in us, dwelling with us. And because you and I are in a world where there are many kinds of love, and because you and I belong to a world where to level off at some standard called decent and honorable, I am constrained to challenge you again to remember that the only kind (?) of love that is worthy of the name "Christian" is the extravagant love, the kind that says: And whatsoever more. This very word of God tells us that our God is extravagant, always taking one more step, always giving up something else. We who are so human are always looking for some stopping point, some resting place, some point of departure in our . Can't we stop here? Ours is the God who is always giving one thing more.

How do you evaluate the sacred ? Quickly let me do it. The story of God and his gracious with his children. The story of God who is always giving one thing more. He made the world. That in itself was a gracious act. God says, I will make a world, and this world when I make it will I give to man. He could have stopped at that point and even that would have been enough to have made us call our God the creator more than the gracious God. But he did not stop.

And he said, I will give man my own image and I will also give to man the freedom of will so that he himself can overjoy in choosing for himself the things that are good. That in itself is another gracious gesture. He made the world. He made man. ^{He} ~~He~~ gave the world to man. He said, It is yours. You can decide for yourself. But make . He could have stopped at any number of , points already. But this is a God who is always saying, Whatsoever more you may need, I will give it.

They shall be as an instrument in my mind by which all other people on the face of the earth shall know the Way, the Truth and the Life. So he gives them in one gracious gesture after another one thing more. Ten Commandments. The Prophets; the

priests, the kings. out of him some day should come the Prince of Peace, the Lord and Saviour of mankind. Always one thing more. The extravagance of the love of God. He gives them Jesus Christ. It could have been enough by the standards of the world .simply to have God visit the earth. No God before that had ever done anything like that. Here God comes to earth, and that in itself could have been the place where he could have stopped. But this God who comes to the earth in Jesus Christ is a god who loves and a God who speaks, and what is more, a God who will suffer. He could have stopped with the preaching of the sermon on the Mount. He could have stopped with the choice of a handful of disciples. He could have stopped as soon as he discovered that people would kill him. But he goes on. One thing more; one thing more; one thing more. This extravagance which is the love of God.

Even when they take him and kill him, God says, One thing more I will give you. This terrible deed I will turn into the tremendous act of redemption and I will give it to you. One thing more -- the extravagance of Christian love.

We who are so human, we have so much to learn. It is so easy to be good to those who are good to us. To speak to those who speak to us; to be kind to those who are kind to us. But to give one , thing more, we who are so human.

Jesus Christ shares this parable of the Good Samaritan in order should receive an unforgettable picture of the extravagance which should always become love. And I submit to you by the authority given to me by Jesus Christ himself, if in your relationship with men and women you do not have a love that can be called extravagant, if you have a love that finds points at which you can very easily stop and go no farther, then you do not have a love extravagant enough to be worthy of the title, "Christian".

I want to close with a very interesting story, and that is what it is, a story. It is the story of a woman who had perhaps the keenest bit of that can ever come to a human being, a woman of much virtue who had a son who was a veritable reprobate, who became as base and as vile a creature as ever lived. folly which becomes people of that type, he became involved with a very cheap woman. Strangely

and oddly enough the cheap woman was always being haunted and disturbed by the virtue of this man's sainted mother, and she could not easily toy (?) with him in the shadow of the mother's devotion and concern. One day she said to the man, Bring me your mother's ^{head} ~~hair~~ thinking, of course, she could go on living easily if virtue could be removed. The , vile, base creature, hardly deserving the word "man", kills his mother, brings to the ~~so he could cut off her head his mother's hair.~~

As he runs wrecklessly he stumbles and falls on the road, and as he picks himself up from the dust and the dirt, he hears a whisper, a whisper of his mother's voice: Are you hurt, my son? The extravagance of Christian love, always willing to give one thing more.

This is the story of mankind who turns its back on love. God says, Whatever else you need, I will give it. The extravagance of Christian love.

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Sunday, September 22, 1957

Pastor Raymond Shaheen

This morning's sermon, which is based upon the Gospel Lesson for today, is entitled, " * * * and one of them," and the text is the 15th Verse of the 17th Chapter of the Gospel according to Luke: " * and one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God."

No matter how often you may read this miracle your reaction is ever the same. And your reaction is the reaction of practically every man who reads this miracle. The reaction is one of astonishment for we even share with our Lord Jesus Christ this degree of astonishment. Could ten people be cured of the dreadful disease of leprosy and ninety per cent of them go their way, refusing to return to thank the one who made it possible? Could it be that only one of them, seeing that he had been cleansed, should return and say personally, Thank you, God, thank you!

This man returned. The same man who before had used his voice to cry out against God, to cry out against mankind. He had been victimized by humanity. The dread curse of leprosy had come to him. In his miserable agony all that he ever said, no doubt, once he knew his affliction was in the matter of a curse. Oh, once he did use his voice to ask God for a blessing: Jesus, Master, have mercy on me. Now he comes back: "Thank you, thank you. Let God's name be praised." And Jesus says, Weren't there ten? Only one of you come back.

Astonished as we are that 90% of them having been cleansed should go their way and not return, can't we find some excuse for them? Isn't there something in us that refuses to believe that people should be so ungrateful? For the moment I must confess I am willing to believe that they were not ungrateful. How could any man receive so great a blessing and fail to realize his debt? I, for one, will say for the moment at least that they were not ungrateful; they were simply ungracious. Not thoughtful enough to put their thanks into words; not thoughtful enough to express it; they who had always been in debt to someone or something. And while I am in this charitable mood, why don't you join me and perhaps together we can find reasons why they did not return.

Could it be that nine out of the ten did not return because they knew a great exhilaration? Now they were cleansed. This is a new-found joy. This is a marvelous experience. Up to that moment they had been the afflicted ones. They walked around as living corpses waiting cheerlessly until death should claim them. Now there was a spring in their step where up until this time they had walked with so great hesitation. The death rattle in their voices had gone. Now they could speak clearly. You couldn't detect anything save the sound of joy. Now they could see -- their hands, their limbs -- once they knew so great pain -- now they could toss them back so freely. This is one reason . I am made whole! I am cleansed! And in this ecstasy, with exhilaration so great, could it be that they did not think to return to say, "Thank you"? The experience itself was so overwhelming. Do you want to be that charitable? Maybe that is one reason why they did not return.

Here is another reason: It could be that having known so great misery for so long they had lost some of the decencies and the courtesies of life. Driven from moral system, separated from their loved ones, having their food thrown to them as men cast food to dogs, having to shout no matter where they went, "Unclean; unclean; unclean"; wearing as their clothing the garments of the dead. This regulation so humiliating: if they should come within one hundred fifty feet of any man who was clean and the wind was blowing from the direction of the leper, they would have to change their course and run away. Not even the wind that blew from a leper was allowed to come to those who were healthy, and the leper himself was responsible (?) for that -- so great was their humiliation. It could be, my friend, that because of this experience year after year they had lost all their sense of courtesy and decency.

I recall as a pastor not so long ago dealing with some folks who came to our shores from camps over in Europe. They had been driven from their homes; they had to face the miserable, the terrible lot of the refugee, a situation not of their making, cast -- so it seemed for a while -- so helplessly upon this sea of life. They who had so much; now so little. They who were so accustomed to their own private pride and honor and delightful way of living -- now cast into a communal way of life. And

sometimes when they came to us they were not as gracious as we had hoped that they would have been, for what they took from the hands of some persons they took almost with a feeling, it is mine anyway. You had so much, so long. We have had so little so long. And only as we dealt with them patiently did we see the old man of another year return, the courteous, the polite. Maybe because of their affliction they had lost the common courtesies. It could happen, my friend.

Well, we who are charitable with these nine who did not return, maybe that is one reason why they did not come back. It had been so long that they had been able to say, "Thank-you" for anything, that they had forgotten how to say it. It is also conceivable that now, having been made whole and clean, when they went back to society they were disillusioned. It could have been that for some of them when they were cast into the leper colony, there were folks who never did like them and they said it was good riddance. It may have been some of the folks discovered that they could ~~not~~ get along very well without them. When they came back clean and healed they discovered that the people back home had changed, too. maybe, who knows, they were displeased (?) on another score. When they came back now as the clean and the healthy ones, they were completely disillusioned by the way people who were healthy were dissipating their lives. Maybe they also discovered that back home now among so-called decent, honorable, healthy people there was hate and there was jealousy and there was strife, and brother did not meet brother on an equal basis. And they remembered that when they were back in the leper colony every man was on the same level. Calamity becomes a level. Maybe when they got back to healthy, normal living, would you believe it, some of them might have had a nostalgia for the days/when at least any man, no matter how miserable he was, could not help but look upon his brother as a brother.

I will predict for you, my friend, that history will record as a classic statement the sentence that was phrased by that woman, the parttime owner and editor of an Arkansas newspaper. Dying of cancer she looks out upon a world of healthy people and

sees in her own street hatred in the hearts of men. You remember what she said: That is a malignancy worse than hers and she would not trade places. A sad indictment upon human nature.

It could have been that when one of these lepers got back and saw the way healthy people dissipated their lives and God-given capacity to love, they might have longed for the day when a miserable man looked upon another man -- not matterhow great his misery -- but still called him brother.

Well, whatever the reason, nine of them did not come back. One of them did. And while our Blessed Lord was astonished by this fact, may I ask you to consider the question, Why did he come back? "And one of them when he saw that he was made whole, returned and gave thanks with a loud voice."

I suggest, my friend, that he came back because he remembered Jesus Christ. It might have been that as they went on their way they suddenly discovered that they were made whole, and when some of them remembered the experience, and said, We are on our way. And suddenly they found themselves cleansed as though Providence in a kind moment had spread on them a benevolent ray and they were the recipients -- as though for the moment that was the way the ball bounced and it was theirs to claim (?). As though perhaps some stroke of good fortune became theirs, and while as a stroke of ill fortune they had been cursed by misery, now by a stroke of good fortune they were cleansed. And maybe when they recalled it, all they thought about was the fact that they were cleansed and they did not think to remember that somewhere along the line they had been confronted by Jesus Christ, and it was Jesus Christ who gave them the word of courage; it was Jesus Christ who gave them the word of hope; it was Jesus Christ who gave them the great polite, "Go." They did not think in terms of Jesus.

One of them did -- and he went back -- and back -- and back until he found Jesus Christ and at His feet he gave thanks.

It is almost a pagan thing, I make bold to tell you now, to just thank "goodness" in general. It is almost a pagan thing just to thank providence. If you ever

find yourself using a vocabulary like this: It was a stroke of good fortune. It was the way the ball bounced. I was lucky, My friend, you are not using a Christian vocabulary. God deserves to be called by name. And when you think of someone, call him by name. That is the Christian's glorious privilege, to be able to call Jesus Christ by name and to thank Him personally. And I am wondering if gratitude is ever gratitude until it is expressed personally. "And one of them when he remembered, returned." Because it had occurred to him that goodness never happens accidentally. What is offered providentially is no accident. Behind it always is the hand of God and blessed indeed is that man who sees beyond the hand of God to the heart of God and to the face of Jesus Christ. And one of them when he remembered the whole thing, he could not separate himself and his blessing from Jesus Christ.

I am pleading with you -- you understand it, of course you do -- I am pleading with you to thank Jesus Christ personally. You can never write it off in anybody else's name. You can no more send somebody else to thank God on your behalf than to send somebody else to stand at the pearly gate asking entrance for you. The Old Testament is perfectly right when it says, even before the day of Jesus Christ, Let the redeemed of the Lord say so.

God has been good to you, my friend. God has been good to me. Poor indeed would I be if I never returned to him and said, Thank you, God, and called Him by name. Sure, God knows you are thankful. Sure, God knows you are grateful. But remember what happens when you tell him: You get an added blessing, for to every man who thanks Him personally, Jesus Christ has an extra word to say.

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Sunday, October 13, 1957 - "The Festival of the Harvest" - Pastor Raymond Shaheen

The text for this day when we mark the Festival of the Harvest is written in the 4th Chapter of the Gospel according to Mark. It begins with the 26th Verse: And he said, so is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up; he knoweth not how.

Maybe he didn't know, but we do. Ours, you see, is the scientific age. Ours is the age of technical advance. Even before the seed is cast into the ground, granting all things will be favorable, the scientist can tell us to what height the stock will grow, the color of the fruit, the quantity, and the quality, as well. We know so much. Ours is the age of science; ours is the age of technical advance.

That does not necessarily mean that spiritually speaking we have an advantage over this man, this Syrian peasant, this farmer in Judea or Galilee who cast his seed in the ground who knew so little about the scientific processes that are beset in order. He only cast the seed into the ground knowing one thing -- that someday there would be a harvest. The secondary factors, the secondary causes he could not name, but he knew one thing -- if he would sow the seed, God would grant a harvest.

I know whereof I speak, my friend. I stem from that stock. I know that for the Near Easterner there is so little dealing with secondary facts. I do this: God does that. That is the way they think. That is the way they reason. They have never concerned themselves so much with what has happened in between. They are simply content to know that somewhere, somehow, God will always be a part of the picture, and they seem to level off their thinking at that point: God this and God that.

That is why you see here our Blessed Lord is talking about this peasant who cast his seed into the ground, and the writer of this page can say truthfully he doesn't know what happens. Rather, he doesn't know how it happens. Rather, he only knows that after the seed there will be a harvest time.

In his ignorance, not knowing so much of the technical and scientific advance,

it could still be said that maybe he was nearer to God, and when the harvest came he bowed his head and called by name the unfailing hand of his Heavenly Father. A last-
ing tribute to man is MILLET'S painting of "The Angelus" where, no matter where you might be, when the harvest time came the head was bowed, because the peasant in the Near East could never divorce from the harvest the unfailing hand of God.

We are the handicapped. We do not live amidst wheat fields. We spend so little time in the garden. We go to the store; we go to the market; we see the finished product. In this game of fantasy that you and I enjoy, sometimes when we talk about our lives in a fashion and we say if we had it to live over again, or if I could make the choice of where and how, I think sometimes if I had to make the choice I would have welcomed completely having been reared and trained on a farm, knowing from the farm certain things that only one might be able to learn upon a farm. Nature is an excellent school-master, the seasons have their place and we are dependent upon the seasons. There are certain chores that must be done at a certain time -- the cows must be milked and the chickens must be fed. There is a time for the chore and man must be responsible. But on the other hand, the farm teaches easily that always behind everything, man is dependent upon God. If the sun is withheld, if the rain does not come, if man himself does not fulfill his part, always, always then man waits for the unfailing hand of God.

Our Blessed Lord walking from village to village there in Judea and Galilee with that typically observant eye of his, shares with his disciple band the lesson which serves as the basis for the lesson this morning. He said, Aye, Mark you, the is little different from the . He casts the seed upon the ground; he goes his way merrily (?); he sleeps at night; he engages in other tasks during the daytime; then he waits for the harvest. Such was the lesson taught by Jesus Christ and his observant eye as he saw the Syrian peasant, the Near East farmer. That eye of his that caught so much -- from a little growing by the side of the road -- from a bird on the wing -- even from a father writhing in anguish in the market square because of a son who is traveling a wayward path. From each of these things in turn Jesus Christ wove a sermon, and in these parables that he gave to us we get something

of the reflection of his own mind, and this ^{this morning} message/ from the gospel record is no exception as he tells about the peasant with his seed, waiting for the harvest season -- so we catch something of the mind and attitude of Jesus Christ that can be gleaned from the lessons of the field.

Observation No. 1: The peasant, the Syrian farmer, casts his seed into the ground, and with confidence and with trust, he waits for the harvest time. That peasant did not go the day after he cast the seed into the ground to probe around the depth and to see what germination was taking place, if roots were springing. No, interestingly enough, there is this telling phrase: He cast his seed into the ground and then he sleeps by night and he engages himself in other activities in the daytime. Even so the whole life of Jesus Christ was lived. Jesus Christ doing his part, and then he waits patiently for God to allow the harvest time to come. This is the life of Jesus Christ.

I say to you this morning, if you come to this place and are so seated where you can see on either side of this nave these windows attractively decorated with the fruits of the earth and the vine, or if you should be fortunate enough to see this thing of beauty before the altar and the chancel itself with the fruits of the earth, if you simply say to yourself: What a thing of beauty this is; how attractive -- but do not wait to catch the eternal truth inherent in these things themselves -- then you have failed to hear the voice of God that can speak so clearly and distinctly even through nature.

What do these things tell us? If they are to come to pass, man must himself first sow the seed, but after he has done that, then he must wait for what ^{only} God Himself will bring to pass. This is a lesson from the field.

I hang my head in shame when I remember how often I have failed to remember. Some of us, you see, think that the whole burden rests upon each of us. -- I must solve this problem. I must carry the weight that is thrust upon me. - And we fail to recognize the fact that God Himself never made any man big enough to solve any problem by himself and by himself alone. While God expects certain things from man, there is

a limitation to the extent that man is able to go. There is always the area in which God Himself is willing to come and to assume the rest of the burden. We who are the age scientific and technical, thinking upon the advances that we have made, feel that we ourselves must have things by nine-thirty tomorrow morning, and if it does not happen then then, perhaps we might lose our faith, not only in ourselves, but even the whole scheme and plan of things.

There is something missing this morning in this service; there is no use denying the fact. I don't know that any of you here in this nave this morning can sit back with a degree of pride and satisfaction as some people were able to do years ago when they looked at the decorations the Church and would say, Ah, That jar of peaches -- it was canned in my home; it was preserved in our kitchen. That loaf of bread -- It was a rare thing to find a home in this parish from which we could get produce to place to attractively here on either side of the altar. In days gone by, in other places where they lived so close to the soil, they brought these things into the Church and with joy and satisfaction the farmer could say, It was from my field those potatoes were grown -- it was from my field that corn was plucked. There is something missing in that respect this morning. And in the fact that it is missing it is not easy for us to appreciate the time that God has to take until that corn could come into of the ear and the . Something missing because we cannot fully appreciate how long it takes God to make one apple.

If you will permit an expression which may be at first difficult to believe, but surely worthy of further thought, it has taken God all the time of the preceding generation in order to make possible what we pluck so easily today from the stalk or the vine. that we take so easily as far as God is concerned, eternity is at stake. The prophet from Nazareth going from village to village recognized these truths so he was able to share them with his disciples. When they looked upon the harvest made ready, he could say to himself, This is not only the hand of man; this is the hand of God, as well.

With faith, with trust, with confidence and with gratitude, Jesus Christ

lived his life remembering that in all Palestine there was no joy in any community like unto the joy that came at harvesttime. A people so dependent upon the earth never had gladness in their midst quite like the gladness that came when the fields were white ^{with} and the harvest, the granaries could be filled and the storehouses made ready for another season, and they could say, God is good.

I could end my sermon at this point, but I dare not. For the truth must be supplied in another area in our lives. There is such a thing as casting the seeds of truth, of love and of mercy into the hearts and souls of men and women. God is the great sower of his love and he uses men and women to come here and there to place in our hearts some precious word, some gracious thing. God is using you as a parent.

This child named for Jesus Christ in the shadow of this ^{altar} ~~table~~ this morning, God, will ask these two people as long as they have the opportunity, to sow the seeds of patience, wisdom, kindness and of the gospel itself into the heart of this precious child. It will take years until this young Curt Henry responds to the grace and affections sown upon him by his parents. They cannot expect him overnight to have the fullness (?) of but with patience, every parent sows the seed of love and kindness, and someday -- someday there is the harvest according to the seed.

There is another side to that terrible truth -- as we gather the good, so there is the time for the gathering of the evil. God is the great harvester and someday -- somewhere -- somehow -- there is always the time of consequence. I end the sermon on a word of warning: As sure as the harvest of the good shall come to pass, even so there shall be the harvest of the evil. Be careful how you sow. The harvest time will surely come.

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18th Trinity, October 20, 1957

"Enriched by Christ" is the title of the sermon which is based upon the Epistle for the day. The text is from the first chapter of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, a portion of the fourth and fifth verses. "I thank my God always on your behalf for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; that in every thing ye are enriched by Him." The Apostle Paul got around a great deal. He went from community to community, always with the fervent desire to establish the Christian Church. And as he would sojourn in any community, he tried to get something of the feel of the locality, something of the native environment, so that ^{himself} he/could better understand the climate in which this particular Christian would have to go his life. Surely he was not unmindful of this as he wrote that letter to this handful Christians and followers. I thank my God upon every remembrance of you. What an exceedingly wonderful thing to say about anybody and especially to be able to say about Christians in Corinth. For Corinth, mark you, was not what you would call a good city. Bad is the word for Corinth. It was at the crossroads of the world with all the apparent and hidden evil that comes from a commercial city. Historians sometimes have a peculiar measure of delight in cataloging for us the vices so typical for Corinth. Paul writes the Christians in Corinth a letter and he says "Do you know what?" Whenever I think of you I thank God. And well he should have as it was not an easy thing to be a Christian in Corinth. It's an easy thing to be a Christian in a Christian climate. It's an easy thing for you and me to think good and gracious thoughts about God right now. This is a perfectly lovely day, or so it began. This is a fine place in which to be found. The beauty in this holy house is chaste, this is clean. We share now the hour of worship as we mark the path to this place with humble and contrite people who love the Lord. It's easy enough for us to be Christians right now, when we close the doors to the world outside. Yesterday and all of its problems, ^{concern} tomorrow with ~~all of~~ its vexing ~~problems~~ yet to come, here when we fellowship with people that we know love the Lord. On the outside where the Christian

is confronted by people who are not Christian, who do not treat heavenly things with reverence, that's an entirely different thing. Says the Apostle Paul "When I think of you in Corinth I cannot do anything else than say 'Thank you, God, for people like them'." They were Christian in an un-Christian situation. Then in the second place, this ~~is~~ a very fine thing that the Apostle Paul writes these people at Corinth when he says "I thank my God when I think of you, and when I think of you I discover something. Since you have come to know Jesus Christ you are enriched in everything. You are different." Ah, there is something to ponder, for shame upon that man whom you will confront in the name of ^{Jesus} Christ, who will delay making a decision, who doesn't want to come over with us because when he thinks of the Christian cause he thinks of deprivation, impoverishment; he thinks a Christian is one who is always having something taken away from him. Says the Apostle Paul "When I think of you Corinthian Christians, I think of people who are enriched, who have a certain something added to their lives, and that, mark you, is what a Christian is, a person whose life is enriched, has something added. When Paul thought of these Christians in Corinth, he thought of a people whose halo could be seen.

Beloved, as a Christian your halo ought to show. As a Christian there ought to be a discernible glow in your eyes. As a Christian there ought to be a difference between your life once you claim Jesus Christ and been possessed by Him as ever against the time when you did not know Him. And the difference between a Christian and a non-Christian should always be one of enrichment. And I have good authority to tell you that. This man Paul ought to know. He got around enough as it was Christians in an unlikely situation and always their glow is discernible. What was it that enriched these Christians at Corinth? What gave them a glow? What made their lives gloriously different. As I read the Epistle lesson I discover at least three things: first, of all the Apostle Paul says that all the promises that God made to them they were discovering for themselves that these promises were true.

When a man becomes a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ and takes God at His word he can detect that there are certain things that God has promised to him. And you really never have a religious experience until you feel that you and God have dealings with each other. You never have a religious experience until somewhere, somehow you can discover that the eye of God is focused directly on you. William James was perfectly right when he said, coining this phrase, "God and the human soul have business with each other."

The next time you are caught in the doldrums and your spirits begin to lag and you feel that all of life itself is tumbling in upon you, I ask you to remember certain promises that God has made you and if the recollection of those promises does not bring back a glow, then God himself is not at fault - remember that.

The historian tells us that once the wife of Martin Luther came downstairs at breakfast-time, completely garbed in black, as is the European custom at the time of mourning. Martin turned to her and said "Who is dead, Katherine". Katy, as he called her, who is dead? She said "From the way you've been acting lately" human as he was, he was despondent upon occasion "from the way you've been acting lately, I thought God must have died. You've had no glow, you've had no ^{is} . The God of the Lord Jesus Christ, the God ~~with~~ who is alive, who is from everlasting to everlasting and has made certain promises to us that will not fail. He says "I will never leave you". That's how alive our God is. "I will not forsake you, I will always make peace available to you, I will give you pardon for your sins. These are promises that God makes to you and to me. They ought to bring a glow to our lives. They ought to bring that quality of enrichment. I belong to God and God belongs to me and nothing can ever cut asunder the bond of love between God and His child.

In the Old Testament there is a fascinating incident of a man who went to the synagogue and he hoped that he might have the opportunity to stand up and speak to declare something. This is what he would have said if he could have said it. And whether he said it in the synagogue or not I cannot tell you - at least it's recorded on the page. All that they ever said about you I've

found to be true and even more so. And that man's life was radiant. God had made certain promises to him and he believed it. Says the Apostle Paul "When I think of you Christians at Corinth I think of the people for whom I must give gratitude, whose lives are enriched by Jesus Christ and ⁱⁿ whose lives I find that the promises of God are being confirmed. I wonder sometimes if a stranger should come within our gates here at Saint Luke Church if he could detect a radiance and glow upon the people of this parish, who in seventeen years have found again and again, brief as our history has been, how time and again God has blessed this congregation as his promises have been remembered. In one of our Fellowship Suppers this past week, one of our charter members reminded me of the time when there were only thirteen present at a service. Think what those thirteen must have remembered. Where together two or three are gathered/in my name, there am I in your midst. What promises they must have remembered that kept them faithful to the task that some day we should go from strength to strength. A people that blessed as we ought always to have a detectable, discernible glow.

lived
In the second place, these people who ~~were~~ at Corinth were enriched as they remembered that every good thing that they knew in their religious experience came to them as a gift, a bestowal of God's favor. It's always a thing in a man's life when he reaches a point when he says that there are some things that he could never earn and some things that he ~~does~~ ^{does} not deserve. Some that ~~he~~ are made available to him because the hands of God are outstretched. Just because that outstretched hand of God is never empty, these people at Corinth remembered that. Life itself they recognize as a gift from God. Eternal life, the promise of salvation, they recognize as a gift of God; that Apostle Paul the itinerant preacher who came to them, they recognized as somebody who had been sent to them, who came and stayed in their midst and he shared the son Jesus Christ. The older I become, the more I am willing to recognize my debt to Jesus Christ for faithful pastors, for godly parents, for kind and gracious folk whose influence for good raise up for me stumbling blocks to the road to hell because I remember them in their integrity, how dare I allow my life to be wasted away. Their gracious

influence for good which I could not earn, which I do not deserve. And above all else the undying love of Jesus Christ.

These people at Corinth looked round about them on every side and saw people wasting their lives on riotous living; saw people offering their lives upon the sacrifice as a sacrifice for sin. But these people at Corinth who took the name of Jesus Christ remembered that since Jesus came into their lives they could no longer live that way nor ^{did} they desire to live that way. And Jesus Christ made the difference and He came to them as a gift. God so loved the world that he gave.

And that led to the third thing that enriched the lives of these Christians at Corinth. They went day by day but always they kept before them the prospect of heaven. As the Apostle Paul said, "You shall be held blameless in the day of Jesus Christ; you look forward to the hope of heaven." For shame upon us. When this lamentable thing can be said about contemporary Christianity, that Christians today all too often concern themselves with this present world, asking God for peace of mind now, asking God for enough to eat, asking God always for the comfort of this life, when seldom enough they'll ever include in their prayers "And God so discipline my soul that when my last hour may come, by Thy grace I may be received in heaven above." To make you as uncomfortable as you ought to be, may I ask this question: how long has it been since you included in your prayers "O God, through Jesus Christ, keep me on the way that leads to heaven and never take away from my heart the desire to be with Thee in heaven above. So busy with this present world always, and yet a man becomes, according to the things for which he strives. And I am willing to believe the very light in heaven above, cast upon a man in this present world, is enough to ^{give} him a glow and surely ~~tax~~ enough to keep him upon the straight and narrow path, when he is guided here in this present world by the light from heaven above.

Somebody has said that something terrible happened when man lost his belief in angels; and to that I would also subscribe. For when men lose their belief in angels, they no longer think overmuch or not enough about heaven itself. As a

Christian, my friend, you have a right to say "heaven is my destination". If we can't reflect something of the ^{grace} ~~peace~~ and beauty of heaven here on earth now, chances are we won't feel very much at home once we get there. These Christians at Corinth kept ever before them the prospect of heaven above. No wonder Paul says "Your lives are enriched. There's a difference". The glow should always be discernible; the halo should shine.

In one of the autobiographies of a communist, one reads somewhere this statement: that he decided to embrace the Christian faith at the same time he retained ~~membership~~ membership in the communist roster. But he wanted to keep his membership in the Christian church secretive; he wanted to keep his profession of the faith of Jesus Christ something to himself; but somebody heard about it and somebody said to him "What do your communist friends think now that you've become a Christian". This was his reply: "I don't think they suspect it in the least".

A man whose Christianity cannot be suspected, by that I mean discerned, does not have the real thing. One of the most precious things that happened during the past week was last Monday night when the membership group met for instruction. Some of the folks were given an opportunity to speak. The hostess for last Monday night who presided at the coffee hour was standing at the door. She was asked to introduce herself in company of all the others and this is what she said to that band of people to be received into membership next Sunday; with a glow in her eyes: "You will find it a wonderful experience". Before this altar she was baptized; publicly before this altar she/confessed her faith in Jesus Christ and her voice of experience "You'll find it a wonderful experience". The glow was discernible. There is a difference. Paul says the difference is one of enrichment.

I covet for each of us a type of Christian faith, which when others see it, they will have no other course but to say "Thank you God for a life like that". I thank my God upon every remembrance of you for in all things ye are enriched by Jesus Christ.

18th Trinity, October 20, 1957

"Enriched by Christ" is the title of the sermon which is based upon the Epistle for the day. The text is from the first chapter of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, a portion of the fourth and fifth verses. "I thank my God always on your behalf for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; that in every thing ye are enriched by Him." The Apostle Paul got around a great deal. He went from community to community, always with the fervent desire to establish the Christian Church. And as he would sojourn in any community, he tried to get something of the feel of the locality, something of the native environment, so that ^{himself} he could better understand the climate in which this particular Christian would have to go his life. Surely he was not unmindful of this as he wrote that letter to this handful Christians and followers. I thank my God upon every remembrance of you. What an exceedingly wonderful thing to say about anybody and especially to be able to say about Christians in Corinth. For Corinth, mark you, was not what you would call a good city. Bad is the word for Corinth. It was at the crossroads of the world with all the apparent and hidden evil that comes from a commercial city. Historians sometimes have a peculiar measure of delight in cataloging for us the vices so typical for Corinth. Paul writes the Christians in Corinth a letter and he says "Do you know what?" Whenever I think of you I thank God. And well he should have as it was not an easy thing to be a Christian in Corinth. It's an easy thing to be a Christian in a Christian climate. It's an easy thing for you and me to think good and gracious thoughts about God right now. This is a perfectly lovely day, or so it began. This is a fine place in which to be found. The beauty in this holy house is chaste, this is clean. We share now the hour of worship as we mark the path to this place with humble and contrite people who love the Lord. It's easy enough for us to be Christians right now, when we close the doors to the world outside. Yesterday and all of its problems, tomorrow with ~~all its~~ ^{concern} its vexing ~~problems~~ yet to come, here when we fellowship with people that we know love the Lord. On the outside where the Christian

is confronted by people who are not Christian, who do not treat heavenly things with reverence, that's an entirely different thing. Says the Apostle Paul "When I think of you in Corinth I cannot do anything else than say 'Thank you, God, for people like them'." They were Christian in an un-Christian situation. Then in the second place, this ~~is~~ a very fine thing that the Apostle Paul writes these people at Corinth when he says "I thank my God when I think of you, and when I think of you I discover something. Since you have come to know Jesus Christ you are enriched in everything. You are different." Ah, there is something to ponder, for shame upon that man whom you will confront in the name of ^{Jesus} ~~of~~/Christ, who will delay making a decision, who doesn't want to come over with us because when he thinks of the Christian cause he thinks of deprivation, empoverishment; he thinks a Christian is ~~one~~ who is always having something taken away from him. Says the Apostle Paul "When I think of you Corinthian Christians, I think of people who are enriched, who have a certain ~~something~~ added to their lives, and that, mark you, is what a Christian is, a person whose life is enriched, has something added. When Paul thought of these Christians in Corinth, he thought of a people whose halo could be seen.

Beloved, as a Christian your halo ought to show. As a Christian there ought to be a discernible glow in your eyes. As a a Christian there ought to be a difference between your life once you claim Jesus Christ and been possessed by Him as ever against the time when you did not know Him. And the difference between a Christian and a non-Christian should always be one of enrichment. And I have good authority to tell you that. This man Paul ought to know. He got around enough as it was Christians in an unlikely situation and always their glow is discernible. What was it that enriched these Christians at Corinth? What gave them a glow? What made their lives gloriously different. As I read the Epistle lesson I discover at least three things: first, of all the Apostle Paul says that all the promises that God made to them they were discovering for themselves that these promises were true.

When a man becomes a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ and takes God at His word he can detect that there are certain things that God has promised to him. And you really never have a religious experience until you feel that you and God have dealings with each other. You never have a religious experience until somewhere, somehow you can discover that the eye of God is focused directly on you. William James was perfectly right when he said, coining this phrase, "God and the human soul have business with each other."

The next time you are caught in the doldrums and your spirits begin to lag and you feel that all of life itself is tumbling in upon you, I ask you to remember certain promises that God has made you and if the recollection of those promises does not bring back a glow, then God himself is not at fault - remember that.

The historian tells us that once the wife of Martin Luther came downstairs at breakfast-time, completely garbed in black, as is the European custom at the time of mourning. Martin turned to her and said "Who is dead, Katherine". Katy, as he called her, who is dead? She said "From the way you've been acting lately" human as he was, he was despondent upon occasion "from the way you've been acting lately, I thought God must have died. You've had no glow, you've had no ^{is} . The God of the Lord Jesus Christ/ the God ~~with~~ who is alive, who is from everlasting to everlasting and has made certain promises to us that will not fail. He says "I will never leave you". That's how alive our God is. "I will not forsake you, I will always make peace available to you, I will give you pardon for your ~~sins~~. These are promises that God makes to you and to me. They ought to bring a glow to our lives. They ought to bring that quality of enrichment. I belong to God and God belongs to me and nothing can ever cut asunder the bond of love between God and His child.

In the Old Testament there is a fascinating incident of a man who went to the synagogue and he hoped that he might have the opportunity to stand up and speak to declare something. This is what he would have said if he could have said it. And whether he said it in the synagogue or not I cannot tell you - at least it's recorded on the page. All that they ever said about you I've

found to be true and even more so. And that man's life was radiant. God had made certain promises to him and he believed it. Says the Apostle Paul "When I think of you Christians at Corinth I think of the people for whom I must give gratitude, whose lives are enriched by Jesus Christ and ⁱⁿ whose lives I find that the promises of God are being confirmed. I wonder sometimes if a stranger should come within our gates here at Saint Luke Church if he could detect a radiance and glow upon the people of this parish, who in seventeen years have found again and again, brief as our history has been, how time and again God has blessed this congregation as his promises have been remembered. In one of our Fellowship Suppers this past week, one of our charter members reminded me of the time when there were only thirteen present at a service. Think ~~what~~ those thirteen must have remembered. Where ^{together} two or three are gathered ~~in~~ my name, there am I in your midst. What promises they must have remembered that kept them faithful to the task that some day we should go from strength to strength. A people that blessed as we ought always to have a detectable, discernible glow.

In the second place, these people who ^{lived} ~~were~~ at Corinth were enriched as they remembered that every good thing that they knew in their religious experience came to them as a gift, a bestowal of God's favor. It's always a thing in a man's life when he reaches a point when he says that there are some things that he could never earn and some things that he ^{does} ~~can't~~ not deserve. Some that ~~he~~ are made available to him because the hands of God are outstretched. Just because that outstretched hand of God is never empty, these people at Corinth remembered that. Life itself they recognize as a gift from God. Eternal life, the promise of salvation, they recognize as a gift of God; that Apostle Paul the itinerant preacher who came to them, they recognized as somebody who had been sent to them, who came and stayed in their midst and he shared the son Jesus Christ. The older I become, the more I am willing to recognize my debt to Jesus Christ for faithful pastors, for godly parents, for kind and gracious folk whose influence for good raise up for me stumbling blocks to the road to hell because I remember them in their integrity, how dare I allow my life to be wasted away. Their gracious

influence for good which I could not earn, which I do not deserve. And above all else the undying love of Jesus Christ.

These people at Corinth looked round about them on every side and saw people wasting their lives on riotous living; saw people offering their lives upon the sacrifice as a sacrifice for sin. But these people at Corinth who took the name of Jesus Christ remembered that since Jesus came into their lives they could no longer live that way ^{did} nor/they desire to live that way. And Jesus Christ made the difference and He came to them as a gift. God so loved the world that he gave.

And that led to the third thing that enriched the lives of these Christians at Corinth. They went day by day but always they kept before them the prospect of heaven. As the Apostle Paul said, "You shall be held blameless in the day of Jesus Christ; you look forward to the hope of heaven." For shame upon us. When this lamentable thing can be said about contemporary Christianity, that Christians today all too often concern themselves with this present world, asking God for peace of mind now, asking God for enough to eat, asking God always for the comfort of this life, when seldom enough they'll ever include in their prayers "And God so discipline my soul that when my last hour may come, by Thy grace I may be received in heaven above." To make you as uncomfortable as you ought to be, may I ask this question: how long has it been since you included in your prayers "O God, through Jesus Christ, keep me on the way that leads to heaven and never take away from my heart the desire to be with Thee in heaven above. So busy with this present world always, and yet a man becomes, according to the things for which he strives. And I am willing to believe the very light in heaven above, cast upon a man in this present world, is enough ^{give} to/him a glow and surely ~~xxx~~ enough to keep him upon the straight and narrow path, when he is guided here in this present world by the light from heaven above.

Somebody has said that something terrible happened when ~~man~~ lost his belief in angels; and to that I would also subscribe. For when men lose their belief in angels, they no longer think overmuch or not enough about heaven itself. As a

Christian, my friend, you have a right to say "heaven is my destination". If we can't reflect something of the ^{grace} ~~peace~~ and beauty of heaven here on earth now, chances are we won't feel very much at home once we get there. These Christians at Corinth kept ever before them the prospect of heaven above. No wonder Paul says "Your lives are enriched. There's a difference". The glow should always be discernible; the halo should shine.

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Reformation Sunday - October 27, 1957

Pastor Raymond Shaheen

In the vernacular of the day, the friend of Martin Luther might have said to him, "What gives, Martin? What has come into you? Do you realize what you have done?" Maybe that is the way his friend would have spoken to him had he noticed that Martin Luther had gone to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg on the night before All Saints Day and had posted upon the doors ninety-five items that he might have discussed with people concerning certain basic practices which had become corrupt in the Church that he came to love, in the Church that he was serving. "What gives, Martin? Do you realize what might happen from what you have done?"

How Martin would have answered I cannot tell, save he might have said, "What I have done, I have done because my heart, my mind and my soul dictate that this is the course that I should take."

When Martin Luther went to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, properly spoken of as All Saints Church, he went on the night before the observance of All Saints Day. If this was part of the strategy or not, I cannot tell, but I do know that the largest attendance, outside of Easter, came to the Church at All Saints Day that had come to this Church from many parts of the world. Many people would come and they would return. They might go from item to item until that list, all ninety-five of them, and then they might have shaken their heads, even as Martin Luther's friend would shake his head. "What gives, Martin? Why have you done this?"

Strangely enough, what Martin Luther did then on October 31, 1531, was not unusually new (?). The Protestant principle as such was not first enunciated by Martin Luther. The Protestant principle is as old as the Christian church itself. The great Protestant principle simply means that by grace are ye saved, and that not of yourself. It is the free gift of God through Jesus Christ. And whenever anyone was able to discern the fact that the church of his day was this clandestine call to the individual soul, whenever any man discovered that his church

as an institution was becoming corrupt and its practices abusive to the soul, whenever any man would call the believer back to the cardinal principle of the Christian faith that a man is saved as he knows Jesus Christ, there the Protestant principle is being proclaimed. You are wrong, my friend, if you think Martin Luther was the first Protestant. He is simply another great and shining light to be among the gallantry of those who, at one time or another, called the Church back to the basic principle of the individual person in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. Long before Martin Luther they took John Bonaventura and burned him at the stake. Long before Martin Luther they took Savonarola and declared him a heretic. Time and time again upon the pages of the history of the Christian Church you find some brave soul holding the Bible in his hand, looking straight into the eye of Jesus Christ, declaring something by way of challenge against the practices that had become corrupt even in the name of the Church of Jesus Christ, and wherever that has taken place, there the Protestant principle is being enunciated.

You make a mistake, my friend, if when you use the word "protestant" you think simply of someone who is against something. In fact, that for the word "protestant" means a state in behalf of; to speak favorably for something. And because you are for something, you are, therefore, against certain things that are contrary to the thing for which you have taken your stand. You make a mistake if you think this word "protestant" simply a negative aspect. The true protestant is always one who is positively favoring (?) something; because he must favor it, he is against anything and everything that may be contrary to it.

For by grace are ye saved and that not of yourself; it is the free gift of God through Jesus Christ. This is the Protestant principle -- to remind men that they are saved one at a time by faith in Jesus Christ. When they take their stand on this score, they, therefore, speak against anything and everything that allows this great truth to be overlooked or to become a corrupt practice of the church.

The Protestant principle has two distinguishing characteristics. This is the first one: That a believer has direct access to Jesus Christ. That means salvation of your soul is a matter that takes place directly between God and the individual through Jesus Christ. What had happened through the years was this -- That the Church had become so interested in perpetuating an organization, an institution, a system, that they allowed people to believe that the way to God was a circuitous route. You went from one saint to another; you went from one priest to another. Or the proclamation of ^{the} saving grace of Jesus Christ came to you from people through council and priest. Always a circuitous route. It is not necessarily bad that God should use men as his agents. But when these agents themselves could become obstructionists, when certain practices that they themselves observed would serve to frustrate the free grace of God, then these intermediaries, then these agents are wicked, when at one stage or another, more emphasis is placed upon the agent and his by-product than is placed upon the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

Historically speaking, this was the immediate situation. Close by Wittenberg had come an agent of the Pope, John Tetzel by name, who had a fervent desire to build in his day what has become perhaps the most splendid church in all Christendom -- breathtaking St. Peters in Rome. There is nothing wrong with building churches. It is an exceedingly wonderful thing to build the walls of the house of God and the spire and a dome to point Heaven, but when these things - bricks and mortar and spires and windows - are established at the expense of a human soul, then this is bad. And desire to build St. Peters and to guarantee , men went in the name of the church and offered a piece of paper which guaranteed a man, if he would buy the paper, that his soul would be guaranteed entrance into Heaven, and, furthermore, he could guarantee such promise of salvation for any one else in whose name he would buy a piece of paper.

This is the work of an intermediary; this is the work of an agent; this is what happens when men themselves allow corrupt practices to exist in the name of the

church. When that happened, God himself smiled with favor upon the enunciation of the Protestant principle -- for by grace are ye saved and that not of yourself; it is the free gift of God through Jesus Christ. An individual can have direct access to God. On bended knee, whatever his condition or circumstances. He does not need to name a circuitous route to God. He draws near to God through Jesus Christ. The path is a direct one.

It is not an accident, it is planned deliberately, my friend, that when you enter this Church, or a number of Churches like this one, the worshipper has free access to the very altar. The only thing that we would allow to stand between you and that altar is a prayer desk, a symbol the protestant principle the individual has direct access to God in Jesus Christ.

Martin Luther in his day -- as the other -- discovered that ever so frequently these agents, these intermediaries, even the Church itself, served as an obstruction to a believer's direct access to God through Christ. Martin Luther, I remind you, is not the first protestant -- he is one of a series. Truth has its explosive hour. Truth can never be kept trampled under foot. There comes the time it shakes the earth -- shakes the world. That is part of the story of October 31, 1531. The Protestant principle -- the believer has direct access to Jesus Christ.

Point 2. God can respond to us wholly, directly. There is direct action on the part of God. God can come to you. God can come to me. Oh, it is a fine thing to use Pastors and teachers. It is a fine thing to have our boys and girls and adults being taught right now by some student of the scriptures. It is a good thing, but a man does not believe it simply because the Pastors stands up and says

Because a man believes in his heart, he hears God speak directly. This is part of the Protestant principle. God speaks to you the word of forgiveness through Jesus Christ. You may take your scriptures; you may read them under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. But when you ask God to bend you according to his purpose and suit (?) you according to His will, God can speak to you

directly. This is part of the Protestant principle. It goes back to the days of the early Christian Church; it goes back to the days of Jesus Christ himself when he went and touched this soul and that soul, and because that thing had happened, they put their fingers reverently to their lips and said, God; This is God himself coming to me.

The principle of the Reformation must always be a continuing process. There are some people sometimes who might put too much emphasis upon their membership in Saint Luke Evangelical Lutheran Church -- in a Church, as such; in an organization, as such -- and forget to emphasize the fact that their membership in this congregation is only incidental to their allegiance to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

I trust that it registered as it should register. With every new member I am privileged to instruct, always on the first night I meet with the group I seek to establish clearly in their minds that I am not interested in just adding another name to the Church roll. I am not interested in simply seeing another person become a member of this parish as such. Nor am I interested in seeing Presbyterians and Baptists and Methodists transferring into a Lutheran church, or even

seeing a member express his in Jesus Christ so his name will be added to this roll. Nay, not so. But I am interested in any man coming to this altar primarily to express his faith and to fervently express his desire to serve Jesus Christ. All the rest of the members here are simply people who have given expression to that great desire and become members of this congregation -- and hold that thing in common.

Now, my friend, I would say to you, if you read the Bible and through the Bible under the direction of the Holy Spirit you have direct access to God through Jesus Christ -- and you do not read your Bible, you have no advantage whatsoever over the man who does not belong to the Protestant tradition. If as a Protestant you do not freely and graciously accept God's redeeming love through Jesus Christ, and claim his promise, you have no advantage whatsoever over the man who is not of

our tradition. To abide by the Protestant principle is a glorious privilege

to be exercised consistnely day after day, in the name of Jesus Christ.

I am wondering if there can be anything more wonderful happen to you and to me than this: To know that on bended knee I myself can call upon the name of the Lord, and hear Him with his own voice call me by name. Direct access -- direct action. But if you don't abide by it, if you don't live by it, you have no advantage over the man who does not enunciate the Protestant principle.

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Sunday, November 3, 1957 -- How to Know the Lord's Will -- Pastor Raymond Shaheen

The sermon is entitled, "How to Know the Lord's Will". The text is from the Epistle for the day, the 17th Verse of the 5th Chapter of Paul's Letter to the Ephesians: Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.

And I presume that it might have been that it was just at that point when this message was being read to that handful of Christians in Ephesus that one of the members of the congregation spoke aloud and said, Would you mind reading that again? The man who had the privilege of reading Paul's letter went back; slowly, clearly and distinctly he read it: Be ye not unwise but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And undoubtedly the man who asked for the statement to be read again was sharing a type of perplexity which is not strange to any of us.

For those of us who have taken the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we have already gone on record saying that we want to do the Lord's will. We want to love Him, we want to serve Him, we want to obey Him. That now is no longer the problem. We have made the decision. Jesus Christ is my master. But when you go to live your life in His name, how will you be able to know what the Lord's will is?

That for some of us has been a great problem. In general we satisfied our minds on that score a long time ago. Generally, we know that it is the Lord's will that everyone should be saved. Generally speaking, we know it is the Lord's will that there should be peace on earth. Generally speaking we know that the Lord wills that we should live with love in our hearts for our brethern. Generally speaking, we turn to the Ten Commandments and we say, There it is. That is the Lord's will for ethical behavior. That is how God wants us to live with each other. We who take the name of Jesus Christ with a triumphant gesture, we hold the New Testament and we say, This, too, is it. As though now we have arrived and forever. Here it is. The Good Book. The word of Jesus Christ himself: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind -- and thy neighbor as thyself. Consider (?) the commandment that I gave you that you love one another.

Yes, generally speaking, we know what the will of the Lord is. We are not

worried about generalization; we are worried about the specific -- pin-pointing the Lord's will at a particular time and a particular problem. With this particular situation before me, now what is the Lord's will?

There are some of us who believe that our lives are God-directed, Christ-inspired. There are some of us who believe that we have no right to have any ties whatsoever without making certain as best we can in our own minds that this is the Lord's will for me at this time.

Oh, it was so very real for me just two years ago this time of the year, wrestling with the decision, confronted by a challenge, and I shall never forget the searching eyes of that dark-haired teen-ager who asked me if I had come to a decision. And I thought that I was answering in a very satisfactory fashion when I said, Yes, I have made a decision and the decision will be made on the basis of what I think the Lord's will is. And immediately he retorted with what is the unabashed that becomes a teen-ager, How will you know what the Lord's will is in this situation?

Out of that struggle this sermon to a large degree has been born. Here is a sermon, I tell you frankly, that has roots that go back at least two years and even before that. How can one know the Lord's will? I must tell you with all the earnestness that my soul can command, it is not always easy. Anything eternally worthwhile sometimes can become difficult and in the difficulty itself there can be great virtue.

Now, what can I say to you? How can one know the Lord's will? I must tell you as frankly as anything I would tell you that we must remember that one's Christian experience is primarily a matter of faith. On faith I accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. On faith I live my days with the prospect of Heaven. Now it could^{well} be that sometimes we make a decision, thinking it to be the Lord's will. We may not at the immediate hour. It may only be sometimes afterwards when we look back and discover now that God confirms in our minds that the turn that we took was the right turn even as we took it as a venture on faith.

I am going to suggest for you this morning several measuring rods that might prove helpful for you, as they have proven helpful for me, To discover what the will

of the Lord may be, one must always begin at the right place. And that place must always be on a man's knees. If you want God to reveal his mind to you, then you must travel the only path by which that revelation will come into reality, and that path is always developed by first getting on your knees.

When you go to Copenhagen you may want to visit the Church of Our Lady, The Church of the Virgin, and you will be very much impressed, as most travellers and tourists are, that in this church certain very fine life-size statues of the apostles, the magnificent work of the Danish sculptor, . His crowning glory is The Christus, which stands beckoning above the altar, hands out-stretched, the bowed head. On occasion the tourist has expressed some kind of disappointment -- "I can't see his face very well." The guide will answer very sincerely, "Why don't you kneel?" For only as you kneel are you able to discern the look upon his face, the gleam in his eye. This is a parable, my friend. For those of us who want to read something upon the face of Jesus Christ we have to get ourselves into the only advantageous position a man can know in the presence of God -- that is, on his knees.

And all of this leads me to say that he who wills to know what the will of the Lord is will know. And don't you dare charge me now with a deliberate play upon words! That is not fancy phrasing. That is good sound Biblical truth. He who wills to know what the will of the Lord is will know. So, if you want to know what the will of the Lord is, you get on your knees and you begin by asking Him. The only one who really knows asks the right question from the right person.

The second suggestion that I will offer as a measuring rod in trying to ascertain what the will of the Lord is for you and for me in any specific situation is this: I always ask myself this question, ~~What would Jesus Christ do in this particular problem?~~ ~~Not, "What would Jesus Christ do in this particular problem?"~~, but, "What does the spirit of Christ dictate that I do?" Now you can draw that line as fine as that, because what Jesus Christ would do he would do because he is Jesus Christ, and you and I are not Jesus Christ. Our feet are always the feet of clay. We are always human -- frail and feeble. We have our limitations, but fortunately we have

~~we have~~ the Christian pattern, which is the mind and spirit of Christ. And if a man wants to know what the will of the Lord is in any given situation, he ought to always concern himself with the spirit of Christ in this matter, what now could be definitely labeled, The Christian Thing to do.

The third suggestion is this: In our endeavor to ascertain what the Lord's will is, we should always employ good plain common sense. And that, too, is Biblically sound. Jesus Christ used it again and again. It was common sense to say that a man was of more value than an ox. You remember the situation from which the illustration is drawn. It was common sense from the lips of Jesus Christ when he said, A man should not build his house upon a foundation which is sand.

In trying to ascertain what the will of the Lord is we are in duty bound to use our minds. God gave us our minds for that privilege and for that purpose, and again and again it could be a very salutary thing if, as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, you could on occasion go to someone whose mind and spirit you respect and there toss the thing before him and ask God to speak to your friend and to guide you. People do not always want to do that sort of thing. People sometimes resort to tom-foolery and trickery.

Leslie Wetherhead, (?) tells in one of his sermons about a man who went to a new city to re-establish himself in business and he wondered in what part of the city he ought to go when he came to the of the street and the subway, and he said, I will follow the first white ^{horse} ~~house~~ that I will see and that for me will be a sign. In the name of God, it would be far better for that man to seek out a good and honest friend whose judgment he could trust, whose common sense could even serve as a token of God's word to him.

The last yardstick and measuring rod I would suggest is this: That in any given situation when you try to ascertain the Lord's will you should always take this supreme measuring rod: What is good as far as mankind is concerned? How could my brother be served if I would decide this as over against that.

When Jesus Christ was here on earth he was always endeavoring to satisfy the basic needs in people's lives. Whatever he did to anyone, he did because it seemed good to him. that his brother should be so treated. Now that is where you and I may bog down. In certain decisions that we may make, we may make them because they are good for us, and that may not necessarily mean they are good for somebody else. We may make them as a matter of expediency. We may make the decision before (or because) we deal only with surface facts. Jesus Christ was always making decisions on the basis of what was good for man in the name of God. Ah, it cost him his life and he had nights, perhaps, when he could not sleep, but always the deed was being dictated by his conscience. How will my brother be saved? I have but one life to live. How could I ~~make~~ ^{make} it count for good in the best possible way?

I must tell you this. The title for this sermon is not, "How to Know What the Lord's Will is." I cannot presume to tell you that. That is something each of us must find out for himself in the specific situation. But as your Pastor I can without hesitation try to deal with you on how you may be able to discover the Lord's will. What may be the Lord's will for you may not be the Lord's will for me.

I would suggest this to you in closing: I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year, Lend me a match that I might find my way into the unknown. He said to me, Go out into the darkness and place your hand into the hand of God. It will be for you better than a light and surer than a known path (?).

Any man who wants to know the Lord's will must begin at the right place. As a venture of faith he turns to God and God never gives a disappointing answer to the man who asks Him the right question. This I most certainly believe or I would not with my conviction in my heart I could stand right here right now.

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11/18/57

The Sermon is entitled "The Whole Armour of God", it is based upon the Epistle Lesson for the day. The text is the eleventh verse of the sixth chapter of Paul's letter to the Ephesians. "Put on the whole armour of God ^{upon} that you may be able to stand against the ~~wilds~~ of the devil." Paul knew exactly what he was talking about and presumably the people who read this letter for the first time knew what he was talking about also. That isn't the question. The question is do you and I know what he was talking about? Because we have a handicap, we live about two thousand years after this letter was written. We live about two thousand years after these people were accustomed to believing in the fact that there was in the world a demonic force at work. And they had a name for him, they called him the Devil. They called him Satan. Ours is the generation that all too frequently has taken from the vocabulary such words as Demon, Diabolical, Demonic forces, even the word Devil or Satan itself. It goes back to several hundred years ago when after the renaissance people thought that man was the measure of everything. If there was good in the world there was good because man did good things. If there was evil in the world it was because man performed evil deeds. Everything was judged by man himself, for the Apostle Paul and for the people of the early Christian Church. God was given his rightful place, and they recognized that when things were done were done contrary to God's will. They said this is the work of the Devil. And when a man embraced faith in Jesus Christ he made a promise that he would serve deliberately the Christian Way, and he would turn his back upon the Devil. Thank God the Christian Church, at least the part that we claim, has never had completely done with that notion. For to this very day, as far as we are concerned, when a man comes here before this Altar, to pledge his faith to Jesus Christ one of the first questions put to him is this. Do you renounce the devil and all his works and all his ways? Now it might be that that's the only time we may think or talk about it. But at least it is important. Unfortunately

I say to you for the greater part, our's is the generation that has not given enough thought to demons, demonic forces, and to the devil himself.

Biblical theology, which is the roots and ground for teaching for the Lutheran Church, always talks about the devil. The Apostle Paul says to the believers of the Lord in his day, "You will have to stand against them, you will have to be prepared, you will have to be protected", and to accomplish that I ask you to put on the whole armour of God. Now if you read this text before you came to church this morning, and that's one reason why we announce the text with the Sermon Title in the Bulletin that most of you get before Sunday. If you would have read this text chances are three things would have come to your mind at once. Finally my brethren be strong in the Lord, put on the whole armour of God that ye may be able to stand against the ^{will} of the devil. This is the first thing that should come to our minds when this text is read. Christians must face wickedness. There is no such thing as a hot-house saint, there is no such thing as growing the christian life in a ^{cloister} ~~cyster~~, there is no such thing as being a christian in a situation where you are protected from a world that is downright wicked. Says the Apostle Paul to the Christians in his day, "You must put on the armour of God that you might be able to withstand the wills of the devil, you have to face wickedness".

I have never been very thankful for any Christian who would permit people to think that once they became believers in the Lord Jesus Christ that they would never have to rub shoulders with people who are wicked. And if God will give me grace and courage I hope that I may never preach a gospel that would allow people to think that once they become members of the Christian Church that they will never have to touch another sinner. The world of which we are a part is a wicked world and there are sinful people in it. Once a man becomes a Christian he is never withdrawn from it. Christians are to be in the world but not necessarily of the way of the world. My ~~soul~~ soul is always set on tiptoe when I read where the Christians got their name at the beginning. Do

you remember where it was that a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ was first ~~sub~~ Christian? I'll tell you where it was, it was at Antioch. The third largest city of the Roman Empire. They were not in a monastery, they were not in a ~~closter~~, but when they went to a business place, when they went to the shop and the market, when they were found amidst ~~the~~ of traffic of an ugly ~~worst~~ world. People said Look, He's Different, as they rubbed shoulders with wicked people. These people who were different were called Christians. The first thing that ~~this~~ ^{this} text should say to any man - A Christian must face a world of wickedness. The second thing that this text ought to say to us quite easily, it's as clear as the print before ~~me~~ you, "Put on the whole armour of God that ye may be able to withstand" . . . Christians are meant to face a world of wickedness and they are meant to withstand, never to capitulate, never to compromise. Now Christians may have to traffic with people who are wicked. It is not intended that they should capitulate. Christians are meant to stand against it, to be positive in their approach and not to be as wicked as the world. The third thing this text says to us is when a man has to face wickedness and while it is meant that he should withstand the force of evil, he is able to do it only as he puts on the whole armour of God. May I say this to you parenthetically, when we read our Bibles we ought to read with a pencil in hand, and without hesitation we ought to underline certain words. The word to be underlined at this point is the word "whole" - put on the Whole Armour of God, not just a part of it. There are people when they embrace the Christian Faith think they can be part-time Christians, and practice what we may refer to as a fractional religion. It is not so, it is not right and it is not decent to say to the Lord Jesus Christ, I will love you and I will serve you, but only on a part-time basis. It is an exemplary word that comes to us from that great soldier of the Salvation Army, General William Booth. He made a magnificent stand for Jesus Christ, he recalled it one day, and somebody asked him to explain the integrity by which

he served Jesus Christ so faithfully. This is his masterful statement - "I decided for Jesus Christ, and I decided that he would have every bit of me". It is not fair to say to Jesus Christ, I'll give you one day, count on me ~~g~~ being good decent and honorable on Sunday, that's the fraction I'll offer you - but don't look for ~~xxxx~~ too much on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday - Fractional Religion. It isn't fair, it isn't decent, it isn't honorable to say to Jesus Christ - I'll give you one hour, Sunday - Sunday Morning - In that hour I'll think your thoughts, ~~IN~~ I'll sing your praise. It's downright indecent, I tell him - it's downright dishonorable to think that you can practice fractional religion - whereby for an ~~xxxx~~ hour new in the quiet beauty of this ~~w~~ holy place, to think that you could have done in one hour with religious devotion and experience. The Apostle Paul says "Put On the Whole Armour of God", for every hour, ~~for~~ every time. One could make much of the verb in this case, to put on - it's an act deliberately chosen, not done casually. By the way, what would you say is the most distinctive thing about man? What would you say in truth ~~man~~^{may} become his crowning glory? That's a question was raised one time in the presence of LYNN HAROLD HOUGH - one of methodistism shining lights in her pulpit of several decades ago. He was in the company of a group of men who did not waste their time in idle conversation, it's a ~~solidarity~~^{solidarity} thing to get together and talk about great and important things. And as this handful of men spent some time together somebody posed the question. What is the most outstanding thing about man? Somebody said I'll tell you quickly - his ability to think - that sets him aside from all other ~~xxxxxxx~~ created things. To think. Somebody said, No that isn't it. The outstanding thing about man is his capacity to feel, to feel deeply - for isn't man propelled and motivated by his ~~xxxxxxx~~ emotions? Man ~~xxxxxxx~~ can suffer, man can love. And the third one said - neither one of you have hit it. This is the outstanding thing about man - his ability to choose - to take a positive side in a moral issue - to deliberately

will to become caught in a conflict. This is the crowning glory of man. And I say to you this morning if you have never found yourself in the place where you deliberately choose to become involved in a conflict for good as over against evil - you have yet to really live. No man has really come to know God until he finds himself caught in a conflict whereby deliberation and by choice he decides in favor of God as over and against the force of evil. Now in order to do that, once the choice is made a man must be protected, and the Apostle Paul says the exceedingly wonderful thing about it is this - A Christian had protection - and he says it is the armour of God. God never sends any man to do battle ~~mx~~ for him without arming him against the enemy. That's the advantage you have as a Christian - God supplies you with the equipment. God says put it on.

I suppose this sermon could be a bit more effective if I could dangle in front of you right now a picture of a knight in arms - then as painter I would show you and call by name each part of that armour, the helmet, the shield, the breast plate, the sandals ^{for} ~~mx~~ the feet, also considered a part of the equipment, the sword. Now there were certain things by which the loins would be girded and how each one of these was considered important and that a man was not called fully equipped for battle unless he had the whole armour of God, the whole armour against the ~~xxxxxx~~ enemy _____.

Put ye on the whole armour of God and wear it, it is not meant for dress parade, it is meant for conflict, for battle. Someone jokingly observed how he watched a troop on parade, when they came to arrest, how one of them took his handkerchief and dusted his shoes, then took off some of the dust from his head gear. He might keep himself a perfect picture. Jokingly the man on the side said I wonder what that chap would do if he were ever caught in the thick of battle. I wonder sometimes what some Christians would do who in so meticulous fashion observe Sunday on dress parade. Then when the battle comes on Monday and Tuesday, where then is their concern, where then and how will they enter

Put it on ...the whole armour of God...and wear it..."

In London there is a street which takes the names from the merchants who first came there...Lombard Street....they used to make money on the side by loaning money... when the knights of that day would be sorely pressed for funds they would be wont to bring their suits of armour and ask for money against them....money to hold them over for a few days..and then they hoped to redeem them....a few days later....BUT some of the knights never came back!

Th word of caution is a good one...dare any man under any circumstance ~~every~~ run the risk of pawning his honor... his armour of God....by saying just for today, I won't be needing it....just for today I won't be honest and decent....

You've caught the accent of it...haven't you. I will not give up my belief in demonic forces....I believe that w are meant to do battle against the forces of ev^{il}...I belive that Satan will never have done with my soul even to the very Gate of Paradise.

I believ that as a follower of Jesus Christ I can be protected through

Love ^Iruth Peace ^Hope Faith Salavation

against the forces of wickedness. I was not meant to capitulate. I was meant to be a Good ^Soldier for Jesus Christ. The battle may be more fierce than I realize....I was meant to keep my arm^{or} on.

Peace is a good symbol for the faith...it is not good enough, however. Jesus did nit come into the world simply to give men peace....He came to empower them by salavation against the force of evil.

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"AS GOD FORGIVES"

The sermon is entitled "As God Forgives". The text is the thirty-third verse of the 18th chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew. "Shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee?" This is from the Gospel for the day - the Gospel which is the parable of the unmerciful servant. How long do you suppose our Blessed Lord had been waiting until he could speak this parable to those who were there to hear Him? I could be wrong but I think perhaps it goes back to the day when, who knows now, as the carpenter's helper in that shop in Nazareth observed how people came in and while they waited until Joseph would finish the yoke, perhaps, for their oxen, as they whiled away their hours until the assignment was completed they would give vent to their feelings - one Arab after another, one Judean after another, one Galilean after another, no matter who it was who might have come to Joseph's shop, occasionally they would lay bare their souls in the conversations that would take place where men are wont to gather. And could it not be that the impressionable carpenter's son discovered at an early age in life their hatred and the bitterness that men could have in their hearts for each other; how one man after the other, perchance, swore revenge against someone who had done him wrong. He would not forget it - what is more he would not forgive. When Jesus went from village to village, what was it that he caught as he put his finger on the pulse-beat of humanity? That ill will that brother knew for brother - hatred, bitterness - all these the ugly stain of sin, when a man is prone to close his heart toward somebody else. How long do you suppose our Blessed Lord had been waiting to teach this lesson - the parable of the unmerciful servant? Ever since, it seems to me, he discovered any man who was willing to close his heart against somebody else. Do you remember the parable? Let me remind you quickly. Peter, just like Peter, had raised the question. How often should a man be forgiven? The Rabbinical Code said that if a man had done somebody else an injury and he came asking for forgiveness, you should forgive him.

If for some reason or another he had committed a similar wrong after he had been forgiven once and he came back to ask that he be forgiven a second time, the Rabbi said "Forgive him". And if he should come back the third time asking forgiveness, the Rabbinical Code says he should be forgiven. But if he comes back the fourth time you don't have to forgive him. Have done with it. Peter remembering that says Lord as he deals with Jesus Christ, recognizing that in Jesus Christ there is something distinctively different, he is one greater than any Rabbi. Peter says "should it be seven times seven" and our Blessed Lord says to Peter "I say unto thee until seventy times seven. Not a matter of arithmetic, Peter, it's a matter of attitude, a disposition on the part of any man". And then He said "I will tell you something. Once there was a man who worked for a king and incurred a debt of twelve million dollars - almost an impossible sum especially in a society where there are only two strata - the very, very poor and the very, very rich. But this staggering figure is used on purpose. Twelve million dollars - an unpayable obligation; but nonetheless the man comes and he says to the king 'have patience with me' and the master says 'all right and because you desire it I will forgive you'. And as Jesus goes on telling the story he says this man went out and found a man who owed him a paltry sum - he who had been forgiven a twelve million debt - finds a man who owes him fifteen, sixteen or seventeen dollars. And he lays hold upon that man and has him thrown into prison until the debt is paid. There are people who discover what's been done and so they get themselves together and they come back and they tell the king, says Jesus, and the king, the master, comes to this man who has been forgiven the twelve million dollar debt and he says "See here. Don't you remember what I did for you? Shouldn't you therefore have mercy upon somebody else". And the king was angered; he issued an order that the man who had been forgiven the twelve million dollar debt should now be thrown into jail. And Jesus ends that parable with these startling words: For shame upon you if they have not made an uncomfortable dent upon your soul. So likewise shall my Heavenly Father do ^{also} ~~likewise~~ unto you if from your heart you do not forgive your brother.

The parable tells us two things: one, the offer of God's forgiveness is unlimited. God will forgive any man who desires it, no matter how great his sin. Here's a figure of speech - twelve million dollars - an unpayable obligation; but Jesus says the man was forgiven. You and I are sinners in the sight of God and our sin, no matter what it is, is still great, and God in his mercy and God in his love says, "All right, I will forgive you in whatsoever condition or circumstance you may be found. And the promise of pardon which is made by God through Jesus Christ is made to any man and to every man. Now if you've ever been foolish enough to permit yourself a kind of smugness because you happen to come to church on a Sunday morning, you spend about ten or twelve minutes at the beginning of the service to ask God's forgiveness and mercy, which is right and proper, but if you think for one minute that you have a corner on God's love, if you would ever be foolish enough to think you have a monopoly on the grace of God, even though you take the name of Christian, you are mistaken. God's mercy, God's love, God's forgiveness is made available to any man. Oh, we have an advantage because we know Jesus Christ; we have an advantage because he makes intercession for us, but the love of God, the mercy of God, the grace of God is an unlimited offer in the sense that it's made available to any man and to every man who may seek it. Remember what happened to a man who was dying upon a cross, who lived a life of shame and evil? In a fleeting moment of life he turned to Jesus Christ and begged for forgiveness. Even to a dying thief the unlimited gift of God's mercy and pardon was made available. No limitation.

I read an interesting thing the other day that in one of the southern states they have a strange custom that when the governor of this state is elected and he establishes residence in the governor's mansion he is given the privilege of going to the state prison and selecting from the prison body nine people who will act as servants in the executive mansion. Anybody who thinks he would like to be put on probation, who would like ^{to have} this kind of freedom, indicates his desire. Then the governor or the mistress of the official mansion, or the chief householder, will go to the prison and make the selection, a selection of the kind of pardon that is limited, nine people, only nine. What is more if these nine people chosen should do

good and acceptable service, when the governor leaves the official residence he can pardon them for life if they have proven themselves. But the choice is made with only nine. But the offer of God's pardon is never limited. Whosoever will may receive pardon when he seeks it aright. There is no joy known to the heart of any man that's quite as great as the joy of knowing that when he calls upon the name of the Lord in faith he can receive forgiveness for his sin. I don't know of anything so wonderful as that. And as long as I live, speaking for one person, I shall always thank God that I have been given the privilege as a minister of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to meet with people again and again, even as we come together now, and assure you that if you seek aright, you shall receive his pardon. It is unlimited. It's even yours.

What is the first thing this parable of the servant tells us? The offer of God's pardon is an unlimited thing, even a man with an unpayable debt can be forgiven. The second thing? I hope you will find it as startling a truth as I have found it. While the offer of God's pardon is unlimited, it does not necessarily mean that his forgiveness is unconditional. There was a time when I believed that when God forgave a man he was forgiven once and forever. I don't know how I could ever have been so foolish as to believe that. But the idea was cast asunder when I met a man who was as despicable a character as I have ever known who one time told me that he had gone to meet with a group of so-called Christians. What right they had ^{the name} ~~to~~ I do not know but they had read to him from the Bible that once you are forgiven, you are forgiven. This vile creature made light of it, that is he took the liberty of living a life of lust and licentiousness, committing greater sin after he had been given this pardon than he had committed before. Once I'm forgiven, he said, I'm forgiven. When God forgives a man it can be said that what He grants has its conditions. I hope you will find that a startling truth. For it means that those of us who come here Sunday by Sunday asking God to have mercy upon us, have mercy upon us, have mercy upon us, and putting that as ~~our~~ ^{in our} first petitions when we come to worship, and that while God gives us pardon, his favor could be withdrawn.

Even so the lesson from the parable, that a man who had been forgiven so great a debt was finally cast into prison because he himself did not live with his fellowmen as one who had been forgiven. God does not forgive any man so that that man himself shall keep that grace bottled up within his own heart. The grace of God, the mercy of God is fluid and shall flow from soul to soul, from heart to heart, and mind to mind. The forgiven man shall become a channel, a vehicle for God's grace and for God's mercy. What does it mean to be forgiven? It means to be reestablished in God's presence, to be able to look upon the face of God and to be able to discern a smile of favor. And God says that's the way I want you to be able to look upon your brother too. If you want a free interpretation of it, here it is: the man who is forgiven should always look upon his brother with activated good will. There are some of us who sometimes find ourselves living with people in a state which is far from being harmonious. What then can we do? We hope and pray that we may find ourselves in that marvelous situation of being able to forgive. But there is something far more important than that. A man must first examine his own soul to make certain that he himself is not responsible for the situation in which his brother finds himself, the one to whom he says, you must first come to me before I forgive.

An old schoolmaster used to say to himself when he had a pupil who was not making such great progress as he would like, a stupid or backward pupil, the professor would always say to himself "Wherein have I failed that this thing should continue". To a degree Jesus Christ holds us responsible for any brother who remains in our company in an unforgiven state. I have had mercy upon you, you should have mercy upon somebody else. And that person should always make certain of the fact that you look upon him with activated good will.

Beloved, I can think of nothing more wonderful than to know that God loves us, that God forgives us. I can think of nothing more dastardly than this, than to know that the smile of God's favor could be withdrawn. It's a sombre truth but there is the parable of our Lord for you. "Shouldest not thou also have had mercy upon him even as I had mercy upon you. So likewise ~~shewin~~ shall my Heavenly Father do unto you if from

your heart you do not forgive. It's a wonderful thing to know that He forgives.
It's a dastardly thing to believe that the smile of His favor could be withdrawn.
Beloved, it does not have to happen to you that way.

"CHILDREN OF LIGHT"

The sermon is entitled "Children of Light". The text is from the Epistle of the day. It's the fifth verse of the first chapter of Paul's letter to the Thessolonians. "Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness." There were a number of things that weighed heavily upon the heart of the missionary pastor, the Apostle Paul. He went from one community to another to establish the Christian religion. He could not stay very long in any one place. That bothered him a great deal. Take this church in Thessolonica, for example. As a matter of fact he had spent only three months among the people in that place. Three months is not a very long time in which to root and ground people in the Christian faith. After he had gone away and spent some time in other places, a report came back to him that things were not going along too well in Thessolonica. I suppose he said to himself: maybe I have no one to blame but myself. I should have stayed there a bit longer; I should have waited until I was absolutely certain that they understood the full meaning of the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul wanted to go back but for one reason or another it was impossible for him to return. So he did the next best thing: he sent his trusted and faithful friend, Timothy. Timothy spent a little time with the Christians in Thessolonica and then he came back and brought the report to his superior. He probably said to him: Paul, I think if you cannot go back you'd better write them a letter. There are at least three things I think, that vex and disturb them. In the first place, they don't know how to deal adequately with the bitterness and the hatred they experience in the hearts of their former Jewish friends. After all, you see, Paul, they did turn their backs upon Judiasm and they did listen to you and they have claimed the Christian faith; but their former Jewish friends do not understand them and there is bitterness; there is even hatred and as Christians they don't understand fully how they should deal with that. And furthermore, Paul, I am very grieved to tell you this: they don't quite understand how to live with one another; they call Christianity a religion of love. But they still find that

The Apostle Paul to a people in his day who were worried about the same things that vex us said to Christians "but remember who you are. You are the children of light, you are the people to whom God has made certain revelations; once that revelation has come to you, you are not only the citizens of time but of eternity as well. You are a people who can always be held in the hollow of God's hand now and always.

Did it ever occur to you beloved how frequently in our Christian experience of worship we use such terms as these: world without end, forever and ever. Christians are people who belong to eternity. Now because they are people who belong to eternity, what is the practical application that we should make of so great a truth. Well, first of all, on the contemporary scene: it seems to me that we ought never to allow ourselves to think that our first obligation today is to enter into a mad race with any other people on the face of the nation simply to cast her satellites into outer space. As a Christian that is not his first concern, even though we may have great discomfort in remembering that a man who is the chief spokesman in his country today, in a far-eastern country, far-eastern in Europe in fact, should say that the next world war would be fought upon American soil. With all the discomfort that should bring to us, Christians should not lose their perspective for we are not meant to live on this earth always and it does not mean that if this present world should be taken away that all that Christians hold dear should be destroyed. There is such a thing as the eternal values of a human soul. There is such a thing as human values: love, mercy, kindness, the elevation of the downtrodden and the persecuted. These should be the Christian's primary task. And while we may be disturbed by the fact that we are lagging in a missile race, we ought to remember^{that} to a certain degree ~~xxx~~ the people who are leading in that race today are still the people who do not hold higher the value of a human soul. It is the supreme responsibility of a Christian, wherever he may be found, to concentrate upon the fact that there is no substitute at any single hour of time for the gracious deed of love for any man and every man.

I have always guarded against the possibility of allowing myself to think that I could speak with authority against any pressing current of the hour. I have never been very patient with men who go to the pulpit of the Christian Gospel and use it as an opportunity to make a tirade against a current, ~~or~~ ^{or social} political issue, but when I come to this sacred desk this morning at the risk of allowing that thing to go by the board today, I do want to say to you that it seems to me that none of us has a right to listen to this text without allowing its full weight to come to our hearts, and our minds as we face the present hour. What is the present hour, how shall we describe it? If you haven't done so already, you ought to admit that there are pressures in the world that would have done with Christianity by tomorrow morning at ten o'clock if it were in their power. There are forces in the world that with bitterness in their heart and with hatred would annihilate the Christian family of God if they could. This is an age in which you will not find upon the history book the time of the Crusade. I am speaking about today. On the other hand, whether you have come to recognize it or not, one has justifiable cause to believe that he should be worried, and I use that figure of speech advisedly, about the end of time. Man has created in this our day the means by which man himself could destroy himself. That is not idle talk and I do not number myself easily how with the apostles of doom. That is an established fact. Ponder it, my friends, today; in the very generation in which you and I are part, man has made possible the very weapon, the instrumentality by which he could destroy his own civilization. I sat once, not long ago, with a man who had a right to speak for he knew whereof he spoke. He told me that some of the men who were directly responsible for fashioning the first atomic bomb made a fervent plea that it should not be unleashed. They did not pose as prophets, they did not pretend to be philosophers and certainly none would take the name of preacher but they knew in their own hearts, in their own minds, that this thing could have but one word if misused - damnable. This is the age in which we live in which the total annihilation of our civilization could become a reality. We have a right to take this page in the New Testament and apply a contemporary application.

some people will embrace the Christian Faith who aren't at all too lovable or too likeable and they can't quite understand how to apply the Christian religion to a fellow-Christian. And then, Paul, I discovered a third thing that disturbs them: they are worrying about the end of the world, the end of time. With these three things resting heavily on his heart, the Apostle Paul wrote the Christians in Thessalonica his first letter. By the way, it is the oldest of all our Christian writings and should have much significance for us today. In the course of the things that he mentions, he comes to this last chapter in his first letter and as he is about to conclude his message, he says to them "You are all the children of light. You are of the day. You are not of the night nor of the darkness. You must remember who you are. Now this figure of speech is a highly important one and one that we dare not underestimate in this our day. Christians, says the Apostle Paul, are people of the light; a tremendous difference - they are not of the darkness. Now you ought to ask this question immediately: ^{to} / when was it that the Apostle Paul ascribed so great a tribute? Well, you are quick to understand my friend, that he did not proclaim this thing broadside from any village square. The people to whom he gave this ascription were but a handful of people, a very, very small minority of all the people who lived in Thessalonica. That in itself is quite significant. And the other thing that we must understand very quickly is this: that the people to whom he gave this ascription were men and women to whom he had come and proclaimed to them ~~that~~ the fullness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. To these people the revelation had come that God is, that God loves them, that God sent Jesus Christ into the world to be their Savior and since Jesus Christ is their Savior they shall be held in the hollow of God's hand for now and for all eternity. I am going to repeat that. They shall be held in the hollow of God's hand for now and for all eternity. Now to these people to whom so wonderful a gospel had been proclaimed Paul says because this is the revelation given to you, you are the children of light, one thing that's been revealed to you and on that basis you ought to live hour by hour, day by day, year by year. You are the children of light and as children of light that's how you ought to behave.

Says the Apostle Paul "You are the children of light. Get on with this business of loving people, of being kind and gracious." It disturbs me greatly that a people can be aroused quickly overnight in a race for control of outer space when we have yet to learn how to deal with the downtrodden- the persecuted and the hate that remains in one man's heart for another man's heart.

What am I saying to you? As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ we ought not to lose our perspective. The main business of a Christian is to bring something of eternity through Jesus Christ into the present. We all have to die at one time, and the end will come to each of us. When or how we cannot tell. But whenever it may come
be waiting
the Judge of all mankind will not ~~wait~~ to see what we have thrust into the heavens as much as He will be waiting to see how lowly we have stooped to lift someone in need. This I most certainly believe.

"CHILDREN OF LIGHT"

The sermon is entitled "Children of Light". The text is from the Epistle of Paul the day. It's the fifth verse of the first chapter of Paul's letter to the Thessalonians. "Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness." There were a number of things that weighed heavily upon the heart of the missionary pastor, the Apostle Paul. He went from one community to another to establish the Christian religion. He could not stay very long in any one place. That bothered him a great deal. Take this church in Thessalonica, for example. As a matter of fact he had spent only three months among the people in that place. Three months is not a very long time in which to root and ground people in the Christian faith. After he had gone away and spent some time in other places, a report came back to him that things were not going along too well in Thessalonica. I suppose he said to himself: maybe I have no one to blame but myself. I should have stayed there a bit longer; I should have waited until I was absolutely certain that they understood the full meaning of the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul wanted to go back but for one reason or another it was impossible for him to return. So he did the next best thing: he sent his trusted and faithful friend, Timothy. Timothy spent a little time with the Christians in Thessalonica and then he came back and brought the report to his superior. He probably said to him: Paul, I think if you cannot go back you'd better write them a letter. There are at least three things I think, that vex and disturb them. In the first place, they don't know how to deal adequately with the bitterness and the hatred they experience in the hearts of their former Jewish friends. After all, you see, Paul, they did turn their backs upon Judaism and they did listen to you and they have claimed the Christian faith; but their former Jewish friends do not understand them and there is bitterness; there is even hatred and as Christians they don't understand fully how they should deal with that. And furthermore, Paul, I am very grieved to tell you this: they don't quite understand how to live with one another; they call Christianity a religion of love. But they still find that

some people will embrace the Christian Faith who aren't at all too lovable or too likeable and they can't quite understand how to apply the Christian religion to a fellow-Christian. And then, Paul, I discovered a third thing that disturbs them: they are worrying about the end of the world, the end of time. With these three things resting heavily on his heart, the Apostle Paul wrote the Christians in Thessalonica his first letter. By the way, it is the oldest of all our Christian writings and should have much significance for us today. In the course of the things that he mentions, he comes to this last chapter in his first letter and as he is about to conclude his message, he says to them "You are all the children of light. You are of the day. You are not of the night nor of the darkness. You must remember who you are. Now this figure of speech is a highly important one and one that we dare not underestimate in this our day. Christians, says the Apostle Paul, are people of the light; a tremendous difference - they are not of the darkness. Now you ought to ask this question immediately: ^{to} / whom was it that the Apostle Paul ascribed so great a tribute? Well, you are quick to understand my friend, that he did not proclaim this thing broadside from any village square. The people to whom he gave this ascription were but a handful of people, a very, very small minority of all the people who lived in Thessalonica. That in itself is quite significant. And the other thing that we must understand very quickly is this: that the people to whom he gave this ascription were men and women to whom he had come and proclaimed to them ~~that~~ the fullness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. To these people the revelation had come that God is, that God loves them, that God sent Jesus Christ into the world to be their Savior and since Jesus Christ is their Savior they shall be held in the hollow of God's hand for now and for all eternity. I am going to repeat that. They shall be held in the hollow of God's hand for now and for all eternity. Now to these people to whom so wonderful a gospel had been proclaimed Paul says because this is the revelation given to you, you are the children of light, one thing that's been revealed to you and on that basis you ought to live hour by hour, day by day, year by year. You are the children of light and as children of light that's how you ought to behave.

I have always guarded against the possibility of allowing myself to think that I could speak with authority against any pressing current of the hour. I have never been very patient with men who go to the pulpit of the Christian Gospel and use it as an opportunity to make a tirade against a current, ~~or~~ ^{or social} political issue, but when I come to this sacred desk this morning at the risk of allowing that thing to go by the board today, I do want to say to you that it seems to me that none of us has a right to listen to this text without allowing its full weight to come to our hearts and our minds as we face the present hour. What is the present hour, how shall we describe it? If you haven't done so already, you ought to admit that there are pressures in the world that would have done with Christianity by tomorrow morning at ten o'clock if it were in their power. There are forces in the world that with bitterness in their heart and with hatred would annihilate the Christian family of God if they could. This is an age in which you will not find upon the history book the time of the Crusade. I am speaking about today. On the other hand, whether you have come to recognize it or not, one has justifiable cause to believe that he should be worried, and I use that figure of speech advisedly, about the end of time. Man has created in this our day the means by which man himself could destroy himself. That is not idle talk and I do not number myself easily ~~how~~ with the apostles of doom. That is an established fact. Ponder it, my friends, today; in the very generation in which you and I are part, man has made possible the very weapon, the instrumentality by which he could destroy his own civilization. I sat once, not long ago, with a man who had a right to speak for he knew whereof he spoke. He told me that some of the men who were directly responsible for fashioning the first atomic bomb made a fervent plea that it should not be unleashed. They did not pose as prophets, they did not pretend to be philosophers and certainly none would take the name of preacher but they knew in their own hearts, in their own minds, that this thing could have but one word if misused - damnable. This is the age in which we live in which the total annihilation of our civilization could become a reality. We have a right to take this page in the New Testament and apply a contemporary application.

The Apostle Paul to a people in his day who were worried about the same things that vex us said to Christians "but remember who you are. You are the children of light, you are the people to whom God has made certain revelations; once that revelation has come to you, you are not only the citizens of time but of eternity as well. You are a people who can always be held in the hollow of God's hand now and always.

Did it ever occur to you beloved how frequently in our Christian experience of worship we use such terms as these: world without end, forever and ever. Christians are people who belong to eternity. Now because they are people who belong to eternity, what is the practical application that we should make of so great a truth. Well, first of all, on the contemporary scene: it seems to me that we ought never to allow ourselves to think that our first obligation today is to enter into a mad race with any other people on the face of the nation simply to cast her satellites into outer space. As a Christian that is not his first concern, even though we may have great discomfort in remembering that a man who is the chief spokesman in his country today, in a far-eastern ^{European} country, ~~for eastern in Europe in fact~~, should say that the next world war would be fought upon American soil. With all the discomfort that should bring to us, Christians should not lose their perspective for we are not meant to live on this earth always and it does not mean that if this present world should be taken away that all that Christians hold dear should be destroyed. There is such a thing as the eternal values of a human soul. There is such a thing as human values: love, mercy, kindness, the elevation of the downtrodden and the persecuted. These should be the Christian's primary task. And while we may be disturbed by the fact that we are lagging in a missile race, we ought to remember ^{that} to a certain degree ~~that~~ the people who are leading in that race today are still the people who do not hold higher the value of a human soul. It is the supreme responsibility of a Christian, wherever he may be found, to concentrate upon the fact that there is no substitute at any single hour of time for the gracious deed of love for any man and every man.

Says the Apostle of Paul "You are the children of light. Get on with this business of loving people, of being kind and gracious." It disturbs me greatly that a people can be aroused quickly overnight in a race for control of outer space when we have yet to learn how to deal with the downtrodden, the persecuted and the hate that remains in one man's heart for another man's heart.

What am I saying to you? As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ we ought not to lose our perspective. The main business of a Christian is to bring something of eternity through Jesus Christ into the present. We all have to die at one time, and the end will come to each of us. When or how we cannot tell. But whenever it may come, the Judge of all mankind will not ^{be waiting} ~~wait~~ to see what we have thrust into the heavens as much as He will be waiting to see how lowly we have stooped to lift someone in need. This I most certainly believe.

Sunday, December 1, 1957 - "Pilgrimage to Bethlehem" - Pastor Raymond Shaheen

The series of Advent sermons this year will be a study of the reaction by those who are confronted by the babe in Bethlehem. The sermon this morning is the introductory in that series. It is entitled, "Pilgrimage to Bethlehem". The text is the 15th Verse of the 2nd Chapter of the Gospel according to Luke: And it came to pass as the angels were gone away from them into Heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass which the Lord has made known unto us.

They were not the only ones, that band of shepherds, who had decided to become Bethlehem bound. A number of people, before these shepherds had decided, were already in Bethlehem. The highways of this tiny village had been heavily lined with people who were on their way to this spot in Judea. Yea, many people went to Bethlehem and there were many reasons that took them to Bethlehem, but unless they had the reason of reasons they would miss the wonderful event that these

What was it that took people to Bethlehem then? Shall I answer the question for you? Many people went -- many reasons. Some went for political reasons. The established government had issued a decree: Everyone shall go back to his home town that the census shall be taken there and then. They could not ignore it. It was an order of the government. There were those who went to Bethlehem for reasons of military significance. Even though Rome had established the peace, she knew that peace would be maintained only as she would be prepared, and from time to time she took a census in order to establish those who were eligible for military service. To ferret out the of the draft; to be able to build up a reservoir of men available for service in the army. That took some people to Bethlehem because the census also served that purpose.

Some went to Bethlehem because they were pleasure-bound. There were many people there and where there were people there can be fun: We will frolic -- we will eat -- we will drink -- we will be merry. And so they were Bethlehem-bound for

~~But~~ that reason.

Some went to Bethlehem because it was a glad (?) time for reunion. Once out of seven years every man going back to his home town. What a gladsome thing to greet all the cousins and uncles. So they went to Bethlehem.

Some went to Bethlehem for commercial reasons. Where there are people, there is money: We will make the most of it. We will get our take while the taking is good.

Said the shepherds, We will go to Bethlehem, too. But, mark you, for none of these reasons. For the shepherd said, Let us go unto Bethlehem and see this thing which the Lord hath made known unto us. They were motivated spiritually, and so they made the pilgrimage to Bethlehem.

That was Pilgrimage to Bethlehem then. The years pass quickly. We come now to Advent 1957. And this, too, can be said of the meaning of Advent for us. Pilgrimage to Bethlehem. We, too, would make the journey, mental or spiritual. We are not the only ones who say, Let us go to Bethlehem. There are many people who make the same decision. The commercial world has already made it, even before we have marked the path that leads to this place. Their shelves have been stocked; their decorations have been in order. They have already been playing the Christmas carols. "Let us turn people's notice to Bethlehem. Let us turn them for commercial reasons to our season of seasons. Let us get our take while the taking is good." So, others besides you, my friends, are Bethlehem bound on the Christmas way.

There are some folks who when they think of Bethlehem and Christmas, think of it as that gladsome time of the year, and they are happy to turn their thoughts towards Bethlehem because when they do there is the Christmas charm and the Christmas cheer. People are a little bit happier -- brighter -- better. Good will is in general; it comes with the season naturally. So there are people who mark the path towards Christmas now gladly because it is a pleasant path, even as there are those who mark the path to Bethlehem because it is a profitable path.

And there are those who are looking forward to making the pilgrimage to Bethlehem, marking the Christmas season again, because it is a time of reunion. They can't think of Christmas without going home for Christmas, and they anticipate it and they are Bethlehem-bound.

But I submit to you this morning that the one that marks the Pilgrimage to Bethlehem he will certainly arrive if he will take one of two roads. If he should take any other than these two, he will not arrive at the Bethlehem of Bethlehems. For, as in the beginning, the real Bethlehem marks the place where God came in the flesh. The real Bethlehem is the crowning glory, earth's shining out when God saw fit to come in Jesus Christ. That is the event of events. That is the occasion of occasions.

But not everyone who went to Bethlehem in the beginning found the real meaning in Bethlehem. You could count, my friend, on one hand the number of people perchance who when they journeyed to Bethlehem found the real, the eternal significance of the Manger Born King.

And now today when we begin our journey to Bethlehem, you might ask a question: How far is it to Bethlehem? But rather ask, my friend, Where is Bethlehem? For in the answer to this question I can give you a reply to the first question. For Bethlehem, you see, is something more than a place on the map. It is a condition in the hill country of every man's soul. It is the place prepared where God through Jesus Christ confronts man. This is the great event. Bethlehem marks God's great adventure -- God coming to earth.

These are days when we are thrilled by man's adventuresome spirit -- the journeys to the south pole, the far corners of the earth. Always the Adventurer-Man, and not satisfied with his earth, he will venture into the heavens; he will thrust one satellite after another; he will plan a rocket to the moon. And there are some people on the face of this earth who would gladly ^{become} ~~seek~~ the first passenger on the way to the moon. And when this comes to pass, man throws out that haughty chest of his

and says, This is man's adventure. This is what man is doing.

But when we stir our hearts, when with reverence we remember Bethlehem, we say: This is God's adventure. This is God coming to us. This is God confronting us with an event. This is Jesus Christ coming to man. That is the meaning of Bethlehem.

Now when you turn your thoughts towards Bethlehem, to make certain that you will arrive, be sure that you take the right road. And I say again to you: To most certainly arrive you must take one of either of two roads: The one is called, The Way of Repentance. The other is called The Way of Humility. You cannot find God in Jesus Christ unless you travel either of these ways. And either one will most certainly take you there.

Philip Brooks, the beloved preacher, was also a hymn writer, and he composed for us that lovely Christmas carol, "O Little Town of Bethlehem".

a preacher to always remind you, "Cast out our sin and enter in; Be born in us today." If you are to arrive at Bethlehem where Jesus Christ is there to confront the human soul, then you must take the Road of Repentance, asking God to forgive you your sins, because no heart is big enough -- in all this whole wide world there is no heart big enough to harbour your sin and Jesus Christ at the same time.

You cannot slavishly go on serving sin and then say, Come on in, Jesus Christ. Make yourself at home. He came to get rid of that sin; he came to purge your soul; he came to cleanse you. And that is the lamentable thing as far as we are concerned. For the greater part man does not know that he is a sinner. For the greater part he is perfectly content to go on just as he is. And there can be no forgiveness, there can be no redemption for any single one of us unless God first hears the plea, Forgive; Forgive. If you want to find Jesus Christ, if you want to go where he is to be found, I suggest that you get on your knees and you begin crawling. Man, sadly enough to say, has never found it a comfortable thing to stay on his knees. ? God send Jesus Christ into the world, and this is the meaning of Beth-

lehem, to save us from our sins.

We have been reading on Wednesday nights together in the Bible Study group the Gospel according to Luke, and as a group we became impressed with the fact that the scriptures say, His name shall be called Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.

Bethlehem bound, my friend? You want to make certain that you arrive where Jesus Christ is to be found. I will tell you how to get there. Look for the road. It is called "Repentance". Isn't that why John the Baptist came to this world? What did John the Baptist preach, the great forerunner of Jesus Christ? Repent.

The second road that you might chose is very much like the first one: Humility. The hymn writer, Philip Brooks, again reminds us: Where meek souls will receive him still, the dear Lord enters in. He has come into this world to be King of Kings, Lord of Lords, God of all above us. But only the meek shall receive Him.

I know your soul, my friend, as well as I know my own. And you count it a grandiose thing to enthrone your own self upon your heart, your desires, your own pride. It is a terrible thing to admit that most of us are quite well pleased with the way we handle things and we are not going to go it easily and abdicate our sovereignty. There is a King Herod in the heart of everyone of us. "I will have my world in my own control. I will give way to no other king." We don't know what it is to be humble before the God of all Gods and Lord of all Lords and King above all Kings. "Where meek souls will receive him still, the dear Lord enters in." -- The crying need to be humble in the presence of God.

The only thing that impressed me about the Church of the Holy Nativity in Bethlehem when I went there was the fact that they lowered the entrance to the Church and you cannot enter standing erect. You have to bow your head. It is symbolic.

Beloved, why ^{will} ~~are~~ we so proudly serve our own desires , why we so ~~willingly~~ serve somebody who is less than God, less than , why will

we allow anybody else to be Lord of our lives when ours can be the King of Kings, Lord of Lords and God above all Gods. And all we have to do is to allow him to enter, meekly to fall before Him and to say, Take it, Jesus Christ; take my life.

How far is it to Bethlehem? Don't ask that question. Ask, Where is Bethlehem? It is in the hill country. It is a condition of your own soul. It is the precise moment, the precise place where you can become confronted by Jesus Christ.

In days gone by there were people who went to Bethlehem. But for the most part they did not find Jesus Christ. Wouldn't it be terrible if that should happen again in 1957 when at this particular season of the year people set their affections towards Bethlehem and towards Christmas and when it comes, they would not have found Jesus Christ.

But, beloved it won't happen to you. This is the first Sunday in Advent. You have come here to make the spiritual preparation. You have already prayed, Stir up our hearts, O Lord, to make ready the way for the only Begotten Son.

Christmas is as wonderful as this: The availability of Jesus Christ to dwell in your heart and -- think of it -- it is going to be yours.

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Sunday, December 8, 1957 --- "The Innkeeper's Answer" --- Pastor Raymond Shaheen

During these Sunday mornings in Advent we are dealing with the reception or the reaction that came in turn by each of those confronted by the birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem. This morning the meditation is entitled, "The Innkeeper's Answer". The text is the 7th verse of the 2nd Chapter of the Gospel according to Luke: And she brought forth her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for him in the inn.

Make bold this statement, my friend. The innkeeper had his excuse all right. The inn was already filled. There was no room. As far as he was concerned, it was as simple as that. For week after week even before that night, people had been making their desires known: Save me a room; save me a place. After all, he had to take care of the regular customer, and these in turn implored him to take care of their friends. You know how it works: I have a friend. He will see that you get something. And so the innkeeper had saved and allotted every available space. And now he is confronted by this sad, weary couple who have traveled eighty miles -- not the most attractive couple in the world. Any tired, travel-wearied couple is far from being attractive. They were just another couple among so many. After all, what had been his lot that night? Hadn't he been constantly repeating, Sorry -- Sorry -- Sorry.

He had his excuse all right. The inn was already filled. But the folly of the innkeeper is this: It is the folly of priority without selectivity. It is all right to give some things first place provided they deserve first place, but to give something first place that is not entitled to such priority is not wisdom -- and sometimes becomes sheer foolishness. The innkeeper had his excuse all right. Prior claims had already been made.

Now remember what I am telling you. There is no justification for this inscription, but I have a way of thinking that perhaps the innkeeper's wife came to him and she said, Can't we do something? (For in my mind's eye, who can understand a woman better than another woman? And who can understand a pregnant woman better than another woman with child?) Look at her. Can't we do something? She might even

-- have gone so far as to check over the register: Look at this one. An attractive spot you made for him, but he didn't even pay his bill the last time. Can't we ask him to give way to her? And after all, this one -- he is strong and robust. A night under the chill air, even under a Judean sky, will not hurt him. Have pity; have pity. But with casual indifference all the innkeeper could say was this: The inn is filled. There is no room.

And thereby hangs a tremendous truth. There ^(was) is no room, as it was. But if there would have been room, it would have been room that had been made. That is it. If Jesus Christ would have received accommodation within the inn that night, the place that would have been allotted him would have been chosen as a matter of decision. Room would have to have been made.

And I say to you this morning with all the candor and ardor of my soul, that is just about precisely the way it should be. For the only room that Jesus Christ really (or rightly?) wants is a room that is given him as a matter of choice and decision. If you really want Jesus Christ to be in your heart, he must be given room that is made for him. Somewhere along the line a decision would have to be made. The innkeeper's folly is the folly of all those who allow priority to exist without selectivity, without making a choice. And the story of what took place in the courtyard of the Bethlehem inn is an eternal parable. It is always taking place. And Jesus Christ, Very God of Very God, is waiting for room in every man's heart. And the room that he wants is the room that comes to him as a matter of choice and decision. But you know the story as well as I know it. There was some space given to him that night. And you know full well what kind of space it was -- Left-over space. Space for which no prior claim had been made. Unused because it had not been allotted.

And thereby hangs another terrible tale. For this, too, becomes typical of mankind. This, too, may become the eternal story. Whatever space Jesus Christ may receive may sometime come to him -- and all too often -- as the leftover of any area without prior claim. In the pages of the diary of my heart as a Pastor, I tell you now without hesitation and without reservation, it is always a lamentable thing to see people allowing Jesus Christ to have some space just because it happens to be left

over. Everything else and everyone else may have prior claim.

I remember in the impressionable year in which I began my ministry having a veritable patriarch, my beloved predecessor in my other parish, say to me -- he struck me to the very depth of my heart when he answered my question -- my beloved predecessor, Dr. Banum (:), almost an octogenerian then, had met a practicing physician on one of the floors of the Williamsport Hospital, and he said to him, "Dr. Bourne (?) -- that was his name, Robert Hill Bourne (:), the rebel son of a preacher; in fact, his father was at one time of a church-related college -- "Do you ever get to church, Doctor? Or, are you one of those who says he never has time to go?" And Dr. Bourne spoke a caustic truth as he walked away, "Well, a man usually has time for the things that he wants to do." And he cut my sainted friend to the heart.

But the answer is a terrible truth. Man usually has time for the things that he wants most to do. And man usually has a way of getting the things that he wants most. And at least he will work deliberately in that direction.

Charitable as I may be with the innkeeper, I have to say this: If he really wanted to have pity upon a pregnant woman that night, he could have done something better for her than to have put her out with the donkeys and the cows. I can't say anything else but that. By the very same token, with all the charity that I ask God to give my soul, the same judgment may be said against some of us. That if we really want to make room for the things of God we could, if we would.

It is always a thrilling thing to see a man giving his life to Jesus Christ under any condition or circumstances. In the years that God has me as a Pastor, I have stood at the altar with people facing the sunset of life who have now claimed Him as Lord and Saviour. As thrilling as it may be there is always the casting of a shadow, for while I would not sit in judgment upon any man, I have gone away to my sacristy saying to myself, It is good to see him give his life to Jesus Christ now, but what a sad thing -- what does he offer Jesus Christ now but the left-over period of his life, the fragment that remains.

As one deals with people he also discovers that there are folk in the prime of their life, having reached a certain degree of rationalization (?), now quite wise enough to deal with certain things, now quite capable of making the choice, now quite capable of being discreet and saying, This is more important than that; This I need; This is incidental; This is insignificant -- and at the same time, being qualified to make a choice, allowing pleasure and one hundred and one other things to get prior claim upon their lives. And God stands waiting -- waiting -- for any fragmentary hour, for any fragmentary opportunity upon which to make claim.

I have seldom hesitated to lay bare my soul to you when I have come to this place. Do you know one criteria that I carry around when I try to ascertain whether I am proving myself a good Pastor to you people? Whenever I feel the burden of the souls of the people of Saint Luke Church resting heavily upon my heart, then I know that I am earning my to be with you. And one of the things that rests heavily upon my heart is this: Not only as a Pastor, but also as a parent, when I realize how time and again we are failing here in Saint Luke Church to indelibly mark upon the minds of those who are young the fact that Jesus Christ deserves their best, and their best should be offered to Him as a matter of choice; that early in the impressionable years of their lives they should begin to say to themselves: God has a right to this first -- and then order all other things accordingly.

There was a poet once who tried to picture for herself if it were to happen again, if hers would have been the golden opportunity of the innkeeper, how would she have reacted, what would have been her answer: And if a sleeping babe now lay, within a manger filled with hay, With God's star pointing out the way, would I believe, would I obey?

It is a question that none of us ought to ignore. Now if it were to happen again, and to happen to you, how could you be certain that yours would not be the answer of the innkeeper, casual, indifferent, allowing other things to take their claim?

Why don't you let me give you a measuring rod? Here it is: If your soul

can be kept sensitive to any one whose condition is less fortunate than yours, if your soul can be kept sensitive to plain, unadulterated innocence, the of a manger, if your soul can be kept sensitive to the faithfulness and devotion of a man like Joseph who looked upon Mary with nothing but complete love, if your soul can be kept sensitive to these things, then I take the gamble with you, my friend, I don't think you would ever turn your back on God. For Jesus Christ is the personification of these, and life, ugly as it may be, has a way of bring Jesus Christ to the very door of your life.

The innkeeper missed his chance. It should never be that way with you.

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Sunday, December 15, 1957

"Herod's Answer"

Pastor Raymond Shaheen

This morning's sermon, which is the third in the Advent series, is entitled "Herod's Answer" and the text is a portion of the 16th Verse of the 2nd Chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew: "Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem and in all the coasts thereof from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men."

I remember as an impressionable Sunday School scholar that of all the incidents concerning the life of Jesus Christ, especially in his boyhood, none touched me quite as sorely as this. Could it be that in this world there could be somebody as wicked as Herod? I couldn't quite understand how even the Bible itself could give an account of a man as diabolical as that. It shocked me to the very depth of my impressionable heart. But when I became a bit older and read something of history and was exposed once or twice to the pages of the Roman History books, the verse (?) doesn't affect me at all. For this was just another vicious episode in the life of a most despicable character.

Let me tell you something about Herod. To begin with, he was about as wicked a character as ever lived. He didn't come by the throne very easily, and as long as he wore the crown it continued to rest just as uneasily on his head. He kept it only by one intrigue after another. Married ten times, he engaged in one marital episode after another as an attempt on his part to guarantee, even through marriage, that the throne would be kept his. This wicked man, incredible as it may be to believe it, took the most faithful of his ten wives, murdered her in cold blood, and then he took the two sons which she bore him and killed them likewise. Hated and despised, he lived for seventy years. And when the time came that he knew that he was about to die, he issued a very peculiar decree. He had to admit that there would be nobody who would mourn his passing; that he was hated. He had to admit the terrible fact that there would be people who would rejoice when he breathed

his last. So to counteract that, this diabolical man issued an order to his cohorts that as soon as he had breathed his last, certain Jewish leaders, the principal people of their race, should be killed. He even issued an order before that, in the face of his impending death he decreed that they would be taken captive, held in bondage until the time of his death, and then they would be killed, so that he would have the assurance that when he died that somewhere people would be crying, somewhere there would be tears shed, not perhaps because he died -- they might mourn the loss of somebody else. Be that as it may, at least he knew that he would go out of this life and there would be people shedding tears somewhere.

With a man like that, small wonder that he decreed something like this. Word had come that Jesus was born to be King of the Jews. All of his life he had endeavored to keep this kingdom to himself and now he would have no opposition, not even a tiny babe. So the decree: Kill them all. Every babe under two years of age in Bethlehem and round about. The slaughter of the innocent -- as diabolical thing as ever: conceived by the mind of any tyrant.

Herod's response to Jesus Christ is the response of hostility. It is one of three possible reactions to Jesus Christ. Historically speaking and psychologically so.

There have always been three reactions to Jesus. The Answer of Hostility: Have done with Him. Get rid of Him. There shall be no room for Him in this world. The Answer of Indifference: For that group the Innkeeper could well afford to be the patron saint. My life is permeated by other things. I will give Him no credence whatsoever.

The third possible reaction: The reaction of adoration and acceptance. Jesus Christ, I will claim you as Lord and Saviour. I will love, serve and obey.

There may be several answers to Jesus Christ. There is only one perfect answer, however, and Herod stands as the type of those who are very definitely hostile.

Now I ask myself this question: Would God allow that to happen? God who is a God of love -- would he allow hate to have the ascendancy? God who is a God of faith -- would he allow a fearful man to raise the tyrant's finger? God who is a God of love, who stretches forth his hand and says, Here is the best that I can give you -- would he allow a wicked Herod by his hand to cut down Jesus Christ ere His life is begun?

I have found it difficult to believe. If God is a God who is great, if God is a God who is powerful, why then did God permit this? But one must remember that God is God, and not man. God is never less than God. He is all that we mean by patience; He is all that we mean by love; He is all that we mean by anything that is eternally worthwhile; He is the same God who at the beginning made man; He gave man freedom -- You may love me, you may serve me, you may claim me, but when you do, it will be because you decide to do. And ^{when} God gave man that freedom so that there should come to God in return the most precious thing that God would ever see -- a heart offered to God voluntarily -- he also gave man the freedom by which he could say No; by which he could turn his back against him, by which he could say, Have done with you, God; I would even kill Jesus Christ.

The man who gave us that most uncomfortable picture of God nonetheless has given, perhaps, an apt figure of speech when you study it closely and it loses the embarrassment of the first blush. The man who said that can be likened to the great gambler. Maybe he had something when he says God was willing to take everything that he had, the finest and the best, and to risk it on man. And that is precisely what God did. The windows of Heaven opened and Jesus Christ comes forth -- Heaven's best. And God doesn't know that mankind could raise up someone as wicked as Herod, and even then, Herod is as wicked as Herod could be.

So, I say to myself, Why? And I must answer the question, Because God is God, and God is never less than God, and God is patient, and God is love, and God is someone who regards the sacredness of human personality. So Herod was hostile. But you must say this for him. He had made up his mind as far as Jesus Christ was con-

cerned. He had come to a decision. He was hostile. Everybody else knew it. He and his kind are to be feared.

And it seems that every succeeding generation has a way of raising up a Herod. Nero -- -- Turn the pages of history -- always some ugly raising his diabolical head and saying, Have done with Jesus Christ. There shall be no room for him in this world. Get rid of him. It may be hard for you to believe that, to believe that such a thing is happening. Ah, Now in this present world of which you and I are part. We came so easily this morning. The doors of this Church are open and whosoever will may come. But there are some places in this world where men and women would almost give life itself if they enjoyed the freedom by which you come or do not come to sing God's praise and to claim Him as Jesus Christ.

Every succeeding generation has a way of raising up a Herod who is hostile to Jesus Christ and gathers his followers. They are to be feared. But what, my friends, what about those who make no Herodian decree, yet who, by the very tenor of their lives, stand with the enemy? Who do not come forward and acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, and until the time comes that they do, their unannounced hostility may be classified as such? And they do no good as long as they do not come forward and claim Him. Equally vicious when one thinks about them is the fact that their unannounced hostility is damaging and they are not easily numbered.

My friend, there are only three reactions to Jesus Christ: You follow Herod and become openly hostile. You become as the Innkeeper and treat him with casual indifference. You become like the ancient Simeon, the character that we study next Sunday morning as we close the Advent series, who says, Now, Lord, let thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people. His is the kind who when they see Jesus Christ adore and accept.

Now before this sermon comes to a close, I want ^{you} to go back with me to the beginning of this sermon. When Jesus Christ came into the world there was opposition. There was a hostile Herod. Why didn't God strike Herod dead? Why was he

willing to allow the opposition to have its day? He is a God of love; He is a God of patience. It begins to make sense to me now, and I hope it may to you, as well. If God would have struck Herod dead as soon as Herod raised his ugly head, what then would have been God's reaction to me and my sin? If God would have stricken me once I would have committed my sin? The God who gives men time to make up their minds, the God who gives men time to decide whether they shall be for Him or against Him, is the same God which gives them time in which they can change their mind. To strike him dead immediately would never allow for a God who would permit conversion; the changed heart and the pathway of the penitent. A God who would have stricken Herod dead once and forever at the first moment, a God who would have denied us, a God who would have denied us a people and would have kept him always as a denial. A God who would never have raised up the Apostle Paul for he would have Saul, the leader of the Jewish. A God who would never be saying to you and to me now, I will give you a little more time, a little more time to change your mind that you may come to the place where you will love me more fervently and serve me more earnestly.

There is only one perfect answer to Jesus Christ, only one: To love, to accept, to serve, to obey. Why wait any longer? Why settle for anything that is less than the best?

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Sunday, December 22, 1957

Pastor Raymond Shaheen

During these Sunday mornings in Advent we have been thinking together about the reactions given to Jesus Christ by some of those who were part of the first Christmas story. This morning we come to the last in the series, and the sermon is entitled, "Simeon's Answer". The text is the 28th and 29th Verses of the 2nd Chapter according to Luke: Then Simeon took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, Lord, Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.

It is as though it were happening right now. I can close my eyes and visualize it ever so clearly.

The sales girl still having a measure of patience. The woman on the other side of the counter was experiencing that indecision that comes when one must choose -- Will it be this? Or, maybe I ought to take that one. And then in a moment her face began to light up. "Yes, I will take this one. It is really a bit more than I can afford, but he really needs it. And what is more, I can see him now when he opens it and I can also see him using it day by day. I will take this one, Miss."

Is there any joy that is quite like the joy that comes to the giver of the gift when the giver knows that when he is about to give is something useful and something that the person will enjoy as he accepts the gift?

It is always a difficult thing to project the imagery of our world over against the imagery of the divine. But at the expense of doing it, I am wondering this morning if that isn't the way it must have been with God. He had chosen to give to the world the best gift that he could possibly bestow, hoping, of course, that they would find it as he hoped they would find it. And isn't there now this great moment in the Heaven of Heavens when God beholds this old man, bent with years, waiting at the temple, and he goes over to Mary and to Joseph and he takes the Christ Child and holds him ever so tenderly in his arms and he smiles. He accepts Jesus Christ and takes Him to his heart.

Is there any joy perhaps in Heaven quite as great as that joy? For Jesus Christ is being recognized for what He is and man is taking Jesus Christ to heart. That is what happened in the temple. That old man, Simeon, had been waiting night and day, and he went to the temple night and day hoping and praying that someday God's best would come, and when God's best would come, he would be there to receive it. And the old man said, This is it.

The answer that Simeon gives to Jesus Christ is the perfect answer. You have already settled it in your minds, haven't you -- this matter of being confronted by Jesus Christ? Only three possible reactions --

You remember the answer of the innkeeper. He treated him with casual indifference. "I won't trouble myself with him at all." The answer last week was the answer of Herod, the king. Herod's is the answer of hostility. "I will be king and I will be king alone. I will not abdicate in favor of any one else. Therefore, if Jesus Christ becomes a threat to me and to all the things I hold dear, Have done with Jesus Christ." That is the second of the three answers, that one may give to Jesus Christ. And the third answer is the answer today as we consider it in Simeon. I will acknowledge -- I will adore -- I will accept.

Historically speaking and logically so, there have been only three answers to Jesus Christ: Indifference --- Hostility --- Acceptance --- and of the three there is only one perfect answer, and the perfect answer to Jesus Christ is when mankind takes Him to his heart and will accept Him.

Beloved, I have not come to this sacred desk this morning to ask you this question, Why did the innkeeper treat Jesus Christ with casual indifference? Nor have I come to this desk this morning to raise the question, Why was Herod hostile? But rather I would raise the question: Why of all the people on the face of the earth was it Simeon who came, found, and without hesitation and without reservation, accepted Jesus Christ? Why is it and whence (?) that the most perfect answer to God's gift in Jesus Christ is forthcoming? Could it be that Simeon had the benefit of old age? Could it be that some people who are older than the rest of us have a way of

evaluating life and being able to sense immediately the true significance of some things? Could it be that Simeon, having lived a bit longer than most of the people in his day, had gotten to the place where he could really evaluate the things that matter most? He had seen in his day kingdoms rise and kingdoms fall. He had seen armies march; he had seen them defeated. He had seen hatred with its diabolical hour. He had observed how children played on the streets with complete innocence, free from prejudice and fear. In his lifetime he had been able to see all of these constant pressures come and go, and then to evaluate them and because he was old, he was able to appreciate the things that have eternal worth.

I say to you who are older than some of the rest of us, Thank God for the growth that comes through years. Never be ashamed of the fact that you may be facing the sunset slope of life. Thank God that he has brought you to the place where you can look back and evaluate with profit all that life has a way of tossing in front of mankind. Simeon had that advantage. He had lived long enough to be able to appreciate the best. What is more, he had lived long enough in order not only to appreciate the best, but also to wait and to hope for it. Simeon is that precious soul who amalgamated himself through prayer and meditation to keep himself alert to the voice of God. God, as Wadsworth says, does have those to whom he whispers in the ear, and Simeon was numbered among the quiet and the lame (?) who wait upon the Lord, who sustain their souls by his precious promises. Simeon had been made this promise by God: Simeon, you will not die, I promise you, until you have seen the salvation of the Lord. And by that promise Simeon went living out the days of his years. God had made a promise. He will remember. And so by circling (?) himself in this fine spiritual discipline through prayer and meditation he kept his ear keenly alert to what God would say to him . That is why when the moment of recognition came, he was able to accept Jesus Christ, and that is why in this great moment when he beheld Jesus Christ that time was crowned with commitment.

I do not have to tell you that in this bad world of confusion right now there are

people who say ever so earnestly, If only someone could come up with the right answer. If only someone would say, This is it.

When you focus your eye upon Simeon, always bring it into clear focus. Here is an old man who when he beheld Jesus Christ said, This is it. This is God's answer. In that babe, manger born to be King, he beheld the face of God.

My friend, I ask you, what can you name as the promises which you know God has made to you? Could it be that you go on living day by day in the sure and certain knowledge that what God has told you will come to pass? Simeon went living day by day remembering God's promise. God has a way of speaking to you and to me. God has a way of whispering to those who will hear, but you must listen if you want an answer to the question. Why, of all the people on the face of the earth, was it Simeon who heard? God told him that someday this promise would come true. It was because Simeon was always listening.

So the old man went to the temple. He saw Mary -- he saw Joseph -- and he took the child. His reaction -- prayerful -- acknowledging -- This is it. This is God's gift. This is God's answer. The way of perfect love. The way of innocence. Pathway of hope. Fruition of faith. And as he acknowledged Jesus Christ, he blessed and adored God. And then he accepted him as Lord and Saviour. This is God's instrument of salvation. It is one thing to acknowledge. It is one thing to adore. It is something entirely different to accept. Simeon had the advantage of possessing all three of these qualities. I will take you, Lord Jesus Christ. I will accept you into my heart.

An anarchist one day went rather blindly into the Church of the Madeleine in Paris and he stood in the rear of the nave while the priests and the choir were giving themselves to the service of the Mass. There he heard the priest intoning these words: Angus Dei Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. The anarchist with the words that become a prophet, a proclaimer of God's truth, said, If only the world would believe. If only the world would accept it, Jesus Christ as Saviour. In this victorious answer that Simeon gives to Jesus Christ, a perfect

answer, mark you full well, he does not accept Jesus Christ as just another prophet; he does not accept Jesus Christ as the perfect man; he does not accept Jesus Christ as another in a series of God's revelation. He accepts Jesus Christ as Saviour.

Beloved, whether you have sensed it or not, we have known each other a comparatively short period of time as the years run, but in the few years that God has allowed me as a proclaimer of His word I have never given myself to a preparation of a series of sermons as earnestly as I have given myself to the preparation of this Adventide series. For with all my heart and with all my soul I believe that Jesus is coming again, waiting to be received. For you but each of us. He is waiting for an answer.

There are three answers that could be given. You know full well. Yes, you do. You know full well the only answer. God grant that you may satisfy him with that perfect answer.

Lord, Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation .which thou has prepared before the face of all people. A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.

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